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FOLK-LORE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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FOLK-LORE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE RELIGION, LEGEND AND LAW

BY

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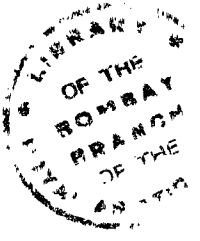

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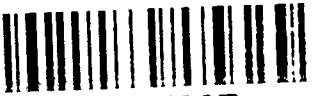

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PART III

THE TIMES OF THE JUDGES AND THE KINGS

(CONTINUED)

CHAPTER XII

THE KEEPERS OF THE THRESHOLD

The Keepers of the Threshold in the temple at Jerusalem.

'IN the temple at Jerusalem there were three officials, apparently priests, who bore the title of Keepers of the Threshold.[1] What precisely was their function? They may have been mere doorkeepers, but their title suggests that they were something more; for many curious superstitions have gathered round the threshold in ancient and modern times.[2] The prophet Zephaniah represents Jehovah himself saying, "And in that day I will punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their master's house with violence and deceit."[3]

[1] Jeremiah xxxv. 4, lii. 24; 2 Kings xii. 9, xxii. 4, xxiii. 4, xxv. 18. In all these passages the English Version, both Authorized and Revised, wrongly substitutes "door" for "threshold." The number of these officials is mentioned in Jeremiah lii. 24, and 2 Kings xxv. 18. That they were priests seems to follow from 2 Kings xii. 9.

[2] The fullest collection of such superstitions is given, along with some untenable theories, by H. Clay Trumbull in his book *The Threshold Covenant*, Second Edition, New York, 1906. See also G. Tyrrell Leith in *Panjab Notes and Queries*, ii. 75 *sq.*, §§ 459, 460; Ernst Samter, *Geburt, Hochzeit und Tod* (Leipsic and Berlin, 1911), pp. 136-146; F. D. E. van Ossenbruggen, "Het primitieve denken," *Bijdragen tot de Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indie*, lxxi. (1915) pp. 211 *sqq.* As to the threshold in German folk-lore, see C. L. Rochholtz, *Deutscher Glaube und Brauch* (Berlin, 1867), ii. 156 *sqq.*

[3] Zephaniah i. 9. The Revised Version wrongly renders "over the threshold." The phrase is rightly translated in the Authorized Version. The English revisers and E. Kautsch in his German translation of the Bible (Freiburg i. B. and Leipsic, 1894) have done violence to the proper sense of the preposition עַל ("upon"), apparently for the purpose of harmonizing the passage with 1 Samuel v. 5. S. R. Driver also thought that the prophet is here denouncing a heathen practice of jumping *over* the threshold (note on Zephaniah i. 9 in *The Century Bible*), and Professor R. H. Kennett writes to me that he inclines to take the same view. Similarly W. Robertson Smith held that the men whom the prophet referred to were the Philistine bodyguards, who leaped over the threshold in conformity with Philistine custom (*The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, Second Edition, London and Edinburgh, 1892, pp. 261 *sq.*). It might be a nice question of casuistry to decide whether a jumper who clears a threshold has committed a more or less

From this denunciation it would appear that to jump on a threshold was viewed as a sin, which, equally with violence and deceit, drew down the divine wrath on the jumper. At Ashdod the Philistine god Dagon clearly took a similar view of the sinfulness of such jumps, for we read that his priests and worshippers were careful not to tread on the threshold when they entered his temple.[1] The same scruple has persisted in the same regions to this day. Captain Conder tells us of a Syrian belief "that it is unlucky to tread on a threshold. In all mosques a wooden bar at the door obliges those who enter to stride across the sill, and the same custom is observed in the rustic shrines."[2] These rustic shrines are the chapels of the saints which are to be found in almost every village of Syria, and form the real centre of the peasant's religion. "The greatest respect is shown to the chapel, where the invisible presence of the saint is supposed always to abide. The peasant removes his shoes before entering, and takes care not to tread on the threshold."[3]

Modern Syrian superstition about treading on a threshold.

This persistence of the superstition in Syria down to modern times suggests that in the temple at Jerusalem the Keepers of the Threshold may have been warders stationed at the entrance of the sacred edifice to prevent all who entered from treading on the threshold. The suggestion is confirmed by the observation that elsewhere Keepers of the Threshold have been employed to discharge a similar duty. When Marco Polo visited the palace at Peking in the days of the famous Kublai Khan, he found that "at every door of the hall (or, indeed, wherever the Emperor may be) there stand a couple of big men like giants, one on each side, armed with staves. Their business is to see that no one steps upon the

Keepers of the Threshold at Peking in the Middle Ages.

deadly sin than one who lights on the top of it. In either case many people will find it hard to understand the indignation of the deity on the subject.

[1] 1 Samuel v. 5. In the Babylonian Talmud (*'Abodah Zarah* 41 b) it is said that "they let alone the Dagon [the statue of the god] and worshipped the *miftan* [the threshold], for they said his princes [genius]-had left the Dagon and had come to sit upon the *miftan*." And in the Palestinian Talmud (*'Abodah Zarah*, iii. 42 d) it is said that they revered the threshold more than the Dagon (statue). See Martin A. Meyer, *History of the City of Gaza* (New York, 1907), p. 123 (*Columbia University Oriental Studies*, vol. v.), from which I borrow these references to the Talmud.

[2] C. R. Conder, *Heth and Moab* (London, 1883), pp. 293 *sq.*

[3] C. R. Conder, *Tent Work in Palestine*, New Edition (London, 1885), p. 306. As to these chapels see below, pp. 39 *sqq.*

threshold in entering, and if this does happen they strip the offender of his clothes, and he must pay a forfeit to have them back again; or in lieu of taking his clothes they give him a certain number of blows. If they are foreigners ignorant of the order, then there are Barons appointed to introduce them and explain it to them. They think, in fact, that it brings bad luck if any one touches the threshold. Howbeit, they are not expected to stick at this in going forth again, for at that time some are like to be the worse for liquor and incapable of looking to their steps."[1] From the account of Friar Odoric, who travelled in the East in the early part of the thirteenth century, it would appear that sometimes these Keepers of the Threshold at Peking gave offenders no choice, but laid on lustily with their staves whenever a man was unlucky enough to touch the threshold.[2] When the monk de Rubruquis, who went as ambassador to China for Louis IX., was at the court of Mangu-Khan, one of his companions happened to stumble at the threshold in going out. The warders at once seized the delinquent and caused him to be carried before "the Bulgai, who is the chancellor, or secretary of the court, who judgeth those who are arraigned of life and death." However, on learning that the offence had been committed in ignorance, the chancellor pardoned the culprit, but would never afterwards let him enter any of the houses of Mangu-Khan.[3] The monk was lucky to get off with a whole skin. Even sore bones were by no means the worst that could happen to a man under these circumstances in that part of the world. Plano Carpini, who travelled in Tartary about the middle of the thirteenth century, a few years before the embassy of de Rubruquis, tells us that any one who touched the threshold of the hut or tent of a Tartar prince used to be dragged out through a hole made for the purpose under the hut or tent, and then put to death without mercy.[4] The feeling on which these restrictions were based

Capital punishment for treading on the threshold of a Tartar prince's hut or tent.

[1] *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, translated by Colonel Henry Yule, Second Edition (London, 1875), i. 336.

[2] Colonel Henry Yule, *Cathay and the Way thither* (Hakluyt Society, London, 1866), i. 132. The friar's travels began between 1216 and 1218, and ended in 1230.

[3] "Travels of William de Rubruquis," in John Pinkerton's *General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London, 1808–1814), vii. 65-67.

[4] Jean du Plan de Carpin, *Relation des Mongoles ou Tartares*, ed. D'Avezac (Paris, 1838), cap. iii. § 2.

is tersely expressed in a Mongol saying, "Step not on the threshold; it is sin." [1]

Respect for the thresholds of the caliphs of Baghdad and the kings of Persia.

But in the Middle Ages this respect for the threshold was not limited to Tartar or Mongol peoples. The caliphs of Baghdad "obliged all those who entered their palace to prostrate themselves on the threshold of the gate, where they had inlaid a piece of the black stone of the temple at Meccah, in order to render it more venerable to the peoples who had been accustomed to press their foreheads against it. The threshold was of some height, and it would have been a crime to set foot upon it." [2] At a later time, when the Italian traveller Pietro della Valle visited the palace of the Persian kings at Ispahan early in the seventeenth century, he observed that "the utmost reverence is shewn to the gate of entrance, so much so, that no one presumes to tread on a certain step of wood in it somewhat elevated, but, on the contrary, people kiss it occasionally as a precious and holy thing." Any criminal who contrived to pass this threshold and enter the palace was in sanctuary and might not be molested. When Pietro della Valle was in Ispahan, there was a man of rank living in the palace whom the king wished to put to death. But the offender had been quick enough to make his way into the palace, and there he was safe from every violence, though had he stepped outside of the gate he would instantly have been cut down. "None is refused admittance to the palace, but on passing the threshold, which he kisses, as I have before remarked, he has claim of protection. This threshold, in short, is in such veneration, that its name of Astanè is the denomination for the court and the royal palace itself." [3]

Respect for the thresholds of Fijian chiefs.

A similar respect for the threshold and a reluctance to touch it are found among barbarous as well as civilized peoples. In Fiji, "to sit on the threshold of a temple is *tabu* to any but a chief of the highest rank. All are careful not to tread on the threshold of a place set apart for the gods: persons of rank stride over; others pass over on their hands and knees. The same form is observed in crossing

[1] *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, translated by Colonel Henry Yule, Second Edition (London, 1875), i. 372.

[2] B. d'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, i. (The Hague, 1777) p. 306, *s.v.* "Bab," citing as his authority Khondemir, in the Life of Mostasem.

[3] Pietro della Valle, "Travels in Persia," in J. Pinkerton's *General Collection of Voyages and Travels*, ix. 26, 31.

the threshold of a chief's house. Indeed, there is very little difference between a chief of high rank and one of the second order of deities. The former regards himself very much as a god, and is often spoken of as such by his people, and, on some occasions, claims for himself publicly the right of divinity."[1] In West Africa "at the entrance to a village the way is often barred by a temporary light fence, only a narrow arched gateway of saplings being left open. These saplings are wreathed with leaves or flowers. That fence, frail as it is, is intended as a bar to evil spirits, for from those arched saplings hang fetich charms. When actual war is coming, this street entrance is barricaded by logs, behind which real fight is to be made against human, not spiritual, foes. The light gateway is sometimes further guarded by a sapling pinned to the ground horizontally across the narrow threshold. An entering stranger must be careful to tread over and not on it. In an expected great evil the gateway is sometimes sprinkled with the blood of a sacrificed goat or sheep."[2] Among the Nandi of British East Africa, nobody may sit at the door or on the threshold of a house; and a man may not even touch the threshold of his own house or anything in it, except his own bed, when his wife has a child that has not been weaned.[3] In Morocco similarly nobody is allowed to sit down on the threshold of a house or at the entrance of a tent; should any person do so, it is believed that he would fall ill or would bring ill luck on the house.[4] The Korwas, a Dravidian tribe of Mirzapur, will not touch the threshold of a house either on entering or on leaving it.[5] The Kurmis, the principal class of cultivators in the Central Provinces of India, say that "no one should ever sit on the threshold of a house; this is the seat of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, and to sit on it is disrespectful to her."[6] The Kalmuks think it a sin to sit on the threshold of a door.[7]

Respect for the threshold in Africa.

Respect for the threshold among the aboriginal tribes of India and Kalmuks.

[1] Thomas Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians*, Second Edition (London, 1860), i. 233.

[2] R. H. Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa* (London, 1904), p. 93.

[3] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), pp. 17, 66.

[4] Edward Westermarck, *Marriage Ceremonies in Morocco* (London, 1914), p. 220, note [1].

[5] W. Crooke, *Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh* (Calcutta, 1896), iii. 333.

[6] R. V. Russell, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), iv. 89.

[7] Benjamin Bergmann, *Nomadische Streifereien unter den Kalmüken* (Riga, 1804), ii. 264.

Conditional prohibitions to touch the threshold.

In most of these cases the prohibition to touch or sit on a threshold is general and absolute; nobody, so far as appears, is ever allowed to touch or sit on it at any time or under any circumstances. Only in one case is the prohibition temporary and conditional. Among the Nandi it seems that a man is only forbidden to touch the threshold of his own house when his wife has a child at the breast; but in that case the prohibition is not confined to the threshold but extends to everything in the house except the man's own bed. However, there are other cases in which the prohibition expressly refers only to certain particular circumstances, though it might be unsafe to infer that its scope is really so limited, and that under all other circumstances people are free to use the threshold at their discretion. For example, at Tangiers, when a man has returned from a pilgrimage to Mecca, it is customary for his friends to carry him over the threshold and deposit him on his bed.[1] But from this usage it would be wrong to infer that in Morocco, at all other times and under all other circumstances, a man or a woman may be freely deposited, or may seat himself or herself, on the threshold of a house; for we have seen that in Morocco nobody is ever allowed under any circumstances to sit down on the threshold of a house or at the entrance of a tent. Again, in Morocco a bride at marriage is carried across the threshold of her husband's house, her relatives taking care that she shall not touch it.[2] This practice of carrying a bride across the threshold on her first entrance into her new home has been observed in many parts of the world, and the custom has been discussed and variously interpreted both in ancient and modern times. It may be well to give some instances of it before we inquire into its meaning.

Practice of carrying a bride over the threshold at her first entrance into her new home.

Practice of carrying a bride over the threshold in Palestine, China, Russia, Java, and Africa.

In Palestine at the present time "a bride is often carried over the threshold that her feet may not touch it, to do so being considered unlucky."[3] The Chinese precautions to prevent a bride's feet from touching the threshold are more elaborate. Among the Hakkas, for example, when the bride

[1] Edward Westermarck, *The Moorish Conception of Holiness* (Helsingfors, 1916), p. 134.

[2] Edward Westermarck, *Marriage Ceremonies in Morocco* (London, 1914), pp. 219 *sq.*, 324; *id.*, *The Moorish Conception of Holiness*, p. 134.

[3] C. T. Wilson, *Peasant Life in the Holy Land* (London, 1906), p. 114.

arrives at the door of her husband's house, she "is assisted from her chair by an old woman acting in the man's interests, and is handed by her over the threshold, where is placed a red-hot coulter steeped in vinegar."[1] The usage perhaps varies somewhat in different parts of China. According to another account, which probably applies to Canton and the neighbourhood, when the bride alights from her sedan-chair at the door of the bridegroom's house, "she is placed on the back of a female servant, and carried over a slow charcoal fire, on each side of which are arranged the shoes which were borne in the procession as a gift to her future husband. Above her head, as she is conveyed over the charcoal fire, another female servant raises a tray containing several pairs of chop-sticks, some rice, and betel-nuts."[2] Among the Mordvins of Russia the bride is, or used to be, carried into the bridegroom's house in the arms of some of the wedding party.[3] In Java and other of the Sunda Islands the bridegroom himself carries his bride in his arms into the house.[4] In Sierra Leone, when the bridal party approaches the bridegroom's town, the bride is taken on the back of an old woman and covered with a fine cloth, "for from this time she is not allowed to be seen by any male person, till after consummation. Mats are spread on the ground, that the feet of the person who carries her may not touch the earth; in this manner she is carried to the house of her intended husband."[5] Among the Atonga, a tribe of British Central Africa, to the west of Lake Nyasa, a bride is conducted by young girls to the bridegroom's house, where he awaits her. At the threshold she stops, and will not cross it until the bridegroom

[1] "Hakka Marriage Customs," *China Review*, viii. (Hongkong, 1879–1880) p. 320.

[2] J. H. Gray, *China* (London, 1878), i. 205. Compare J. F. Davis, *The Chinese*, New Edition (London, 1845–1851), i. 267, "The bride is carried into the house in the arms of the matrons who act as her friends, and lifted over a pan of charcoal at the door."

[3] Hon. John Abercromby, "Marriage Customs of the Mordvins," *Folk-lore*, i. (1890) p. 442. The custom seems now to be obsolete, for it is not mentioned by J. N. Smirnov in his account of the marriage customs of the Mordvins, though he notices what he supposes to be traces of marriage by capture among the people (*Les Populations Finnoises des bassins de la Volga et de la Kama*, Première Partie, Paris, 1898, pp. 341 *sqq.*).

[4] G. A. Wilken, "Plechtigheden en Gebruiken bij Verlovingen en Huwelijken," *De verspreide Geschriften* (The Hague, 1912), i. 498.

[5] John Matthews, *A Voyage to the River Sierra-Leone* (London, 1791), p. 118.

has given her a hoe. She then puts one foot over the threshold of the doorway, and her husband gives her two yards of cloth. After that, the bride puts both feet within the house and stands near the doorway, whereupon she receives a present of beads or some equivalent.[1]

Practice of carrying a bride over the threshold among Aryan peoples from India to Scotland.

In these latter accounts the avoidance of the threshold at the bride's entrance into her new home is implied rather than expressed. But among Aryan peoples from India to Scotland it has been customary for the bride on such occasions carefully to shun contact with the threshold, either by stepping over it or by being carried over it. Thus, for example, in ancient India it was the rule that the bride should cross the threshold of her husband's house with her right foot foremost, but should not stand on the threshold.[2] Exactly the same rule is said to be still followed by the southern Slavs at Mostar in Herzegovina and the Bocca di Cattaro.[3] Among the Albanians, when the bridal party arrives at the bridegroom's house, the members of it take care to cross the thresholds of the rooms, especially that of the room in which the bridal crowns are deposited, with the right foot foremost.[4] In Slavonia the bride is carried into the bridegroom's house by the best man.[5] Similarly, in modern Greece, the bride may not touch the threshold, but is lifted over it.[6] So in ancient Rome, when the bride entered her new home, she was forbidden to touch the threshold with her feet, and in order to avoid doing so she was lifted over it. In recording the custom, Plutarch, like some modern writers, interpreted it as a relic of a practice of forcibly capturing wives.[7] A Cala-

[1] Sir Harry H. Johnston, *British Central Africa* (London, 1897), p. 413.

[2] *The Grihya-Sûtras*, translated by H. Oldenberg, part ii. (Oxford, 1892) pp. 193, 263 (*The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxx.); M. Winternitz, *Das altindische Hochzeitsrituell nach dem Apastambîya - Grihyasûtra* (Vienna, 1892), pp. 23, 72 (*Denkschriften der Kaiser. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien*, Philosoph.-Historische Classe, xl.).

[3] F. S. Krauss, *Sitte und Brauch der Südslaven* (Vienna, 1885), pp. 430, 431.

[4] J. G. von Hahn, *Albanesische Studien* (Jena, 1854), i. 146.

[5] Ida von Düringsfeld und Otto Freiherr von Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Hochzeitsbuch* (Leipsic, 1871), p. 84.

[6] C. Wachsmuth, *Das alte Griechenland im neuem* (Bonn, 1864), p. 97.

[7] Plutarch, *Quaestiones Romanae*, 29; Catullus lxi. 166 *sq.*, with Robinson Ellis's commentary; Plautus, *Casina*, iv. 4. 1; Varro, cited by Servius on Virgil, *Eclog.* viii. 29; Lucan, *Pharsalia*, ii. 359. Compare J. Marquardt, *Das Privatleben der Römer*[2] (Leipsic, 1886), p. 55.

brian bride at the present day is careful not to stumble on the threshold when she enters her husband's house, for such a mishap would be deemed of evil omen.[1] In some parts of Silesia the bride is carried over the threshold of her new home.[2] Similarly, in country districts of the Altmark it is, or used to be, customary for the bride to drive in a carriage or cart to her husband's house; on her arrival the bridegroom took her in his arms, carried her into the house without allowing her feet to touch the ground, and set her down by the hearth.[3] In French Switzerland the bride used to be met at the door of her husband's house by an old woman, who threw three handfuls of wheat over her. Then the bridegroom took her in his arms, and so assisted her to leap over the threshold, which she might not touch with her feet.[4] The custom of carrying the bride over the threshold into the house is said to have been formerly observed in Lorraine and other parts of France.[5] In Wales "it was considered very unlucky for a bride to place her feet on or near the threshold, and the lady, on her return from the marriage ceremony, was always carefully lifted over the threshold and into the house. The brides who were lifted were generally fortunate, but trouble was in store for the maiden who preferred walking into the house."[6] The usage seems to have been similar in Lincolnshire, for we read that "on this same bride being brought by her husband to his home in Lincolnshire, at the end of the honeymoon, the custom of lifting the bride over the threshold was observed; the bride and bridegroom got out of the carriage a few yards from the house, and he carried her up the steps, and into the hall."[7] In some parts of Scotland, as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the wedding party arrived at the bridegroom's house, "the young wife was lifted over

[1] Vincenzo Dorsa, *La Tradizione Greco-Latina negli Usi e nelle Credenze Popolari della Calabria Citeriore* (Cosenza, 1884), p. 87.

[2] P. Drechsler, *Sitte, Brauch und Volksglaube in Schlesien* (Leipsic, 1903–1906), i. 264.

[3] J. D. H. Temme, *Die Volkssagen der Altmark* (Berlin, 1839), p. 73.

[4] Ida von Düringsfeld und Otto Freiherr von Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Hochzeitsbuch* (Leipsic, 1871), p. 106.

[5] Ida von Düringsfeld und Otto Freiherr von Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, *Hochzeitsbuch*, pp. 251, 258.

[6] Marie Trevelyan, *Folk-lore and Folk-stories of Wales* (London, 1909), p. 273.

[7] *County Folk-lore*, v. *Lincolnshire*, collected by Mrs. Gutch and Mabel Peacock (London, 1908), pp. 233 *sq.*

the threshold, or first step of the door, lest any witchcraft or *ill e'e* should be cast upon and influence her."[1]

Improbability of the theory that the lifting of the bride over the threshold is a relic of marriage by capture.

What is the meaning of this custom of lifting a bride over the threshold of her husband's house? Plutarch suggested that at Rome the ceremony might be a reminiscence of the rape of the Sabine women, whom the early Romans carried off to be their wives.[2] Similarly some modern writers have argued that the rite is a relic or survival of an ancient custom of capturing wives from a hostile tribe and bringing them by force into the houses of their captors.[3] But against this view it may be observed that the custom of lifting the bride over the threshold can hardly be separated from the custom which enjoins the bride to step over the threshold without touching it. In this latter custom there is no suggestion of violence or constraint; the bride walks freely of her own accord into the bridegroom's house, only taking care that in doing so her feet should not touch the threshold; and, so far as we know, this custom is at least as old as the other, since it is the one prescribed in the ancient Indian law-books,[4] which say nothing about lifting the bride over the threshold. Accordingly we may conclude that the practice of carrying a wife at marriage into her husband's house is simply a precaution to prevent her feet from coming into contact with the threshold, and that it is therefore only a particular instance of that scrupulous avoidance of the threshold which we have found to prevail among many races of mankind. If any further argument were needed against bride-capture

[1] James Napier, *Folk Lore, or Superstitious Beliefs in the West of Scotland within this Century* (Paisley, 1879), p. 51. Compare J. G. Dalyell, *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1834), p. 291, "The bride was lifted over the threshold of her husband's house, in imitation of the customs of the ancients."

[2] Plutarch, *Quaest. Roman.* 29.

[3] F. B. Jevons, *Plutarch's Romane Questions* (London, 1892), pp. xcv. The same explanation is favoured by Lubbock (Lord Avebury) (*The Origin of Civilisation*,[4] London, 1882, p. 122) and L. von Schroeder (*Die Hochzeitsgebräuche der Esten*, Berlin, 1888, p. 92). On the other hand, it has been rightly rejected by E. Tyrrell Leith (*Panjab Notes and Queries*, ii. 76, § 460), M. Winternitz (*Das Indische Hochzeitsrituell*, p. 72), W. Crooke ("The Lifting of the Bride," *Folk-lore*, xiii. 1902, pp. 242 *sqq.*), H. C. Trumbull (*The Threshold Covenant*, p. 36), E. Samter (*Geburt, Hochzeit und Tod*, pp. 136 *sqq.*), and E. Westermarck (*Marriage Ceremonies in Morocco*, p. 220 note [2]).

[4] The *Grihya-Sutras*. See above, p. 8 note [2].

as an explanation of the practice, it would seem to be supplied by the marriage customs of Salsette, an island near Bombay, where the bridegroom is first himself carried by his maternal uncle into the house, and afterwards lifts his bride over the threshold.[1] As no one, probably, will interpret the carrying of the bridegroom into the house as a relic of a custom of capturing husbands, so neither should the parallel lifting of the bride over the threshold be interpreted as a relic of a custom of capturing wives.

The avoidance of contact with the threshold seems to indicate a belief in the sanctity of the threshold.

But we have still to ask, What is the reason for this reluctance to touch the threshold? Why all these elaborate precautions to avoid contact with that part of the house? It seems probable that all these customs of avoidance are based on a religious or superstitious belief in some danger which attaches to the threshold and can affect those who tread or sit upon it. The learned Varro, one of the fathers of folk-lore, held that the custom of lifting the bride over the threshold was to prevent her committing a sacrilege by treading on an object which was sacred to the chaste goddess Vesta.[2] In thus referring the rite to a religious scruple the Roman antiquary Varro was much nearer the truth than the Greek antiquary Plutarch, who proposed to deduce the ceremony from a practice, or at all events a case, of capturing wives by force. Certainly in the opinion of the Romans the threshold appears to have been invested with a high degree of sanctity; for not only was it sacred to Vesta, but it enjoyed the advantage of a god all to itself, a sort of divine doorkeeper or Keeper of the Threshold, named Limentinus, who was roughly handled by the Christian Fathers, his humble station in life laying him open to the gibes of irreverent witlings.[3]

Sanctity of the threshold among the Romans.

Belief that the threshold is haunted by spirits.

Elsewhere the threshold has been supposed to be haunted by spirits, and this belief of itself might suffice to account for the reluctance to tread or sit upon it, since such acts would naturally disturb and annoy the supernatural

[1] G. F. D'Penha, "Superstitions and Customs in Salsette," *The Indian Antiquary*, xxvii. (1899) p. 117.

[2] Varro, cited by Servius on Virgil, *Ecl.* viii. 29, "*Quas* [*scil. sponsas*] *etiam ideo limen ait non tangere, ne a sacrilegio inchoarent, si deposituraе virginitatem calcent rem Vestae, id est numini castissimo, consecratam.*"

[3] Tertullian, *De Idolatria*, 15; Arnobius, *Adversus Nationes*, i. 28, iv. 9, 11 and 12; Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, vi. 7.

beings who have their abode on the spot. Thus in Morocco people believe that the threshold is haunted by jinn, and this notion is apparently the reason why in that country the bride is carried across the threshold of her new home.[1] In Armenia the threshold is deemed the resort of spirits, and as newly wedded people are thought to be particularly exposed to evil influences, they are attended by a man who carries a sword for their protection and who makes a cross with it on the wall over every door.[2] In heathen Russia the spirits of the house are said to have had their seat at the threshold;[3] and consistently with this tradition "in Lithuania, when a new house is being built, a wooden cross, or some article which has been handed down from past generations, is placed under the threshold. There, also, when a newly-baptized child is being brought back from church, it is customary for its father to hold it for a while over the threshold, 'so as to place the new member of the family under the protection of the domestic divinities.' . . . A man should always cross himself when he steps over a threshold, and he ought not, it is believed in some places, to sit down on one. Sick children, who are supposed to have been afflicted by an evil eye, are washed on the threshold of their cottage, in order that, with the help of the Penates who reside there, the malady may be driven out of doors."[4] A German superstition forbids us to tread on the threshold in entering a new house, since to do so "would hurt the poor souls";[5] and it is an Icelandic belief that he who sits on the threshold of a courtyard will be attacked by spectres.[6] In the Konkan, a province of the Bombay Presidency, it is customary to drive iron nails and horseshoes into the

[1] Edward Westermarck, *Marriage Ceremonies in Morocco* (London, 1914), pp. 219 *sq.*

[2] Manuk Abeghian, *Der armenische Volksglaube* (Leipsic, 1899), p. 91.

[3] P. von Stenin, "Ueber den Geisterglauben in Russland," *Globus*, lvii. (1890) p. 269.

[4] W. R. S. Ralston, *Songs of the Russian People*, Second Edition (London, 1872), pp. 136 *sq.* In Sonnenberg when a child has the cramp it is laid on the door-sill. See August Schleicher, *Volkstümliches aus Sonneberg* (Weimar, 1858), p. 146.

[5] Adolf Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube*[2] (Berlin, 1869), p. 372, § 608. However, in Silesia a contrary superstition enjoins you to be sure to tread on the threshold when you enter a new house; for it is thought that otherwise you will not remain in the house a year. See P. Drechsler, *Sitte, Brauch und Volksglaube in Schlesien* (Leipsic, 1903–1906), ii. 2 *sq.*

[6] F. Liebrecht, *Zur Volkskunde* (Heilbronn, 1879), p. 370.

threshold at full moon, or on the evening of the last day of the month, for the purpose of preventing the entrance of evil spirits.[1]

Custom of burying the dead at the doorway of a house.

Sometimes, though not always, the spirits who haunt the threshold are probably believed to be those of the human dead. This will naturally happen whenever it is customary to bury the dead, or some of them, at the doorway of the house. For example, among the Wataveta of East Africa "men who have issue are as a rule interred at the door of the hut of their eldest surviving wife, whose duty it is to see that the remains are not disturbed by a stray hyena. The Muinjari family and the Ndighiri clan, however, prefer making the grave inside the wife's hut. Women are buried near the doors of their own houses. People who are not mourned by a son or a daughter are cast into a pit or trench which is dug some little distance from the cluster of huts, and no notice is taken even if a beast of prey should exhume and devour the corpse."[2] Again, in Russia the peasants bury still-born children under the threshold;[3] hence the souls of the dead babes may be thought to haunt the spot. Similarly in Bilaspore, a district of the Central Provinces of India, "a still-born child, or one who has passed away before the *Chhatti* (the sixth day, the day of purification) is not taken out of the house for burial, but is placed in an earthen vessel (a *gharā*) and is buried in the doorway or in the yard of the house. Some say that this is done in order that the mother may bear another child."[4] So in the Hissar District of the Punjab, "Bishnois bury dead infants at the threshold, in the belief that it would facilitate the return of the soul to the mother. The practice is also in vogue in the Kangra District, where the body is buried in front of the back door."[5] And with regard to Northern India generally, we read that "when a child dies it is

Still-born children buried under the threshold in order to secure their rebirth.

[1] R. E. Enthoven, "Folklore of the Konkan," *The Indian Antiquary*, xliv. (1915), *Supplement*, p. 64.

[2] Claud Hollis, "Notes on the History and Customs of the People of Taveta, East Africa," *Journal of the African Society*, No. 1 (October, 1901), p. 121.

[3] W. R. S. Ralston, *Songs of the Russian People*, Second Edition, p. 136.

[4] E. M. Gordon, *Indian Folk-tales* (London, 1908), p. 49; R. V. Russell, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), ii. 413.

[5] *Census of India, 1911*, vol. xiv. *Punjab*, Part i. *Report*, by Pandit Harikishan Kaul (Lahore, 1912), p. 299.

usually buried under the house threshold, in the belief that as the parents tread daily over its grave, its soul will be reborn in the family."[1] A similar belief in reincarnation may explain the custom, common in Central Africa, of burying the afterbirth at the doorway or actually under the threshold of the hut;[2] for the afterbirth is supposed by many peoples to be a personal being, the twin brother or sister of the infant whom it follows at a short interval into the world.[3] By burying the child or the afterbirth under the threshold the mother apparently hopes that as she steps over it the spirit of the child or of its supposed twin will pass into her womb and be born again.

Abortive calves buried under the threshold of the cowhouse in England.

Curiously enough in some parts of England down to modern times a similar remedy has been applied to a similar evil among cows, though probably the persons who practise or recommend it have no very clear notion of the way in which the cure is effected. In the Cleveland district of Yorkshire "it is alleged as a fact, and by no means without reason or as contrary to experience, that if one of the cows in a dairy unfortunately produces a calf prematurely—in local phrase 'picks her cau'f'—the remainder of the cows in the same building are only too likely, or too liable, to follow suit; of course to the serious loss of the owner. The old-world prophylactic or folklore-prescribed preventative in such a contingency used to be to remove the

[1] W. Crooke, *Natives of Northern India* (London, 1907), p. 202. A somewhat different explanation of the custom is reported by Colonel Sir R. C. Temple (*Panjab Notes and Queries*, i. 123, § 925), "A case occurred in Ambálá Cantonments, in which a humble couple, Jaiswárás, in, for them, comfortable circumstances, were arraigned for concealing the birth of a child. It was found buried under the threshold. It turned out that infanticide was the last thing the parents intended, for it was a first-born son, and that the infant had died about nine days after birth, and had been buried, where it was found, in order that in constantly stepping over it the parents would run no risk of losing any subsequent children that might be born. They said it was the custom of the caste so to bury all children that died within fifteen days after birth."

[2] Fr. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika* (Berlin, 1894), pp. 391, 674; *Emin Pasha in Central Africa, being a Collection of his Letters and Journals* (London, 1888), p. 84; J. A. Grant, *A Walk across Africa* (Edinburgh and London, 1864), p. 298; John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu* (Cambridge, 1915), pp. 43, 45, 123, 214, 282; C. G. Seligmann, "Some Aspects of the Hamitic Problem in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) pp. 658 *sq.*

[3] See the evidence collected in *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, i. 182-201 (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part i.).

threshold of the cowhouse in which the mischance had befallen, dig a deep hole in the place so laid bare, deep enough, indeed, to admit of the abortive calf being buried in it, on its back, with its four legs all stretching vertically upwards in the rigidity of death, and then to cover all up as before."[1] A shrewd Yorkshireman, whom Dr. Atkinson questioned as to the continued observance of this quaint custom, replied, "Ay, there's many as dis it yet. My au'd father did it. But it's sae mony years syne, it must be about wore out by now, and I shall have to dee it again."[2] Clearly he thought that the salutary influence of the buried calf could not reasonably be expected to last for ever, and that it must be reinforced by a fresh burial. Similarly the manager of a large farm near Cambridge wrote not many years ago, "A cowman (a Suffolk man) lately said to me that the only cure for cows when there was an epidemic of abortion was to bury one of the premature calves in a gateway through which the herd passed daily."[3] The same remedy was recorded more than a hundred years ago by an English antiquary: "A slunk or abortive calf buried in the highway over which cattle frequently pass, will greatly prevent that misfortune happening to cows. This is commonly practised in Suffolk."[4] Perhaps the old belief may have been that the spirit of the buried calf entered into one of the cows which passed over its body and was thus born again; but it seems hardly probable that so definite a notion as to the operation of the charm should have survived in England to modern times.

Possible connexion of the sanctity of the threshold with the theory of rebirth.

Thus the glamour which surrounds the threshold in popular fancy may be in part due to an ancient custom of burying dead infants or dead animals under the doorway. But this custom cannot completely account for the superstition, since the superstition, as we saw, attaches to the thresholds of tents as well as of houses, and so far as I am aware there is no evidence or probability of a custom of

[1] Rev. J. C. Atkinson, *Forty Years in a Moorland Parish* (London, 1891), p. 62. Compare *County Folk-lore*, ii. *North Riding of Yorkshire, York, and the Ainsty*, collected and edited by Mrs. Gutch (London, 1901), p. 68.

[2] Rev. J. C. Atkinson, *op. cit.* pp. 62 *sq.*

[3] *Folk-lore*, xvi. (1905) p. 337.

[4] Francis Grose, *A Provincial Glossary*, New Edition (London, 1811), p. 288.

burying the dead in the doorway of a tent. In Morocco it is not the spirits of the dead, but the jinn, who are supposed to haunt the threshold.[1]

Sacrifice of animals at thresholds.

The sacredness of the threshold, whatever may be the exact nature of the spiritual beings by whom it is supposed to be enforced, is well illustrated by the practice of slaying animals in sacrifice at the threshold and obliging persons who enter the house to step over the flowing blood. Such a sacrifice often takes place at the moment when a bride is about to enter her husband's house for the first time. For example, among the Brahuis of Baluchistan, "if they are folk of means, they take the bride to her new home mounted on a camel in a *kajāva* or litter, while the bridegroom rides along astride a horse. Otherwise they must needs trudge along as best they may afoot. And as soon as they reach the dwelling, a sheep is slaughtered on the threshold, and the bride is made to step on the blood that is sprinkled, in such wise that one of the heels of her shoe is marked therewith. A little of the blood is caught in a cup, and a bunch of green grass is dropped therein, and the mother of the groom stains the bride's forehead with the blood as she steps over the threshold."[2] So at marriages at Mehardeh, in Syria, they sacrifice a sheep outside the door of the house, and the bride steps over the blood of the animal while it is still flowing. This custom is apparently observed both by Greeks and Protestants.[3] Similarly "in Egypt, the Copts kill a sheep as soon as the bride enters the bridegroom's house, and she is obliged to step over the blood flowing upon the threshold, at the doorway."[4] Among the Madis or Morus, a tribe of the Upper Nile, the father of the bridegroom constructs a new hut for his son; a sheep is killed at the door, and bride and bridegroom enter over the body and blood of the animal.[5] The custom is similar among the Latukas, another tribe of the same region. A house is built for the wedded couple; a goat or a sheep is slaughtered, and over its blood the

Custom of brides stepping over blood at entering their new home.

[1] Above, p. 12.

[2] Denys Bray, *The Life-History of a Brāhūī* (London, 1913), p. 76.

[3] S. I. Curtiss, *Primitive Semitic Religion To-day* (Chicago, 1902), p. 204.

[4] J. L. Burckhardt, *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* (London, 1830), i. 265 note *.

[5] Robert W. Felkin, "Notes on the Madi or Moru Tribe of Central Africa," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, xii. (1882–1884) p. 322.

bridal pair pass into their new home.[1] Among the Bambaras of the Upper Niger sacrifices to the dead are generally offered on the threshold of the house, and the blood is poured on the two side-walls of the entrance. It is on the threshold, too, that the shades of ancestors are saluted by the child who is charged with the duty of carrying the seed-corn from the house to the field at the ceremony of sowing.[2] These customs seem to show that in the opinion of the Bambaras the souls of their dead dwell especially at the threshold of the old home.

Sacrifices to the dead at the threshold among the Bambaras.

Among the Gonds of the Central Provinces in India the sun or, as they call him, Nārāyan Deo, is a household deity. "He has a little platform inside the threshold of the house. He may be worshipped every two or three years, but if a snake appears in the house, or any one falls ill, they think that Nārāyan Deo is impatient and perform his worship. A young pig is offered to him and is sometimes fattened up beforehand by feeding it on rice. The pig is laid on its back over the threshold of the door, and a number of men press a heavy beam of wood on its body till it is crushed to death. They cut off the tail and testicles, and bury them near the threshold. The body of the pig is washed in a hole dug in the yard, and it is then cooked and eaten. They sing to the god, 'Eat, Nārāyan Deo, eat this rice and meat, and protect us from all tigers, snakes and bears in our houses; protect us from all illnesses and troubles.' Next day the bones and any other remains of the pig are buried in the hole in the compound, and the earth is well stamped down over it."[3] Thus among the Gonds the sun is apparently conceived as a guardian deity, who keeps watch and ward at the threshold of houses to prevent the ingress of wild beasts, sickness, and any other evil thing.

Sacrifices to the sun at the threshold among the Gonds.

Among the South Slavs a sacrifice is sometimes offered at the threshold on a different occasion. When children have died one after the other in a house, and the priest is reciting the funeral service in the parlour for the last departed, the head of the house strikes off the head of a cock or of a

Sacrifices at the threshold among the South Slavs.

[1] Franz Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika* (Berlin, 1894), pp. 790 *sq.*

[2] Jos. Henry, *Les Pambara* (Münster i. W., 1910), pp. 91, 234.

[3] R. V. Russell, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), iii. 101 *sq.*

cake on the threshold, buries the head under the threshold, and lays the body on the threshold, in order that the priest, on quitting the parlour, may step over it. The popular explanation of the sacrifice is as follows: "The dead head under the threshold, that the living (head) may remain above the threshold; but the body on the threshold is to take the place of other bodies in the same house to which in future the priest's robe would have come."[1] In other words, the sacrifice of the cock is vicarious; the death of the fowl serves as a substitute for the death of human beings who would otherwise have perished in the house, and over whom the priest would in due course have performed the funeral rites. On the principles of popular superstition the explanation is probably correct; for we shall see later on that repeated deaths of children in a family are commonly set down to the malice of demons, and many quaint devices are resorted to for the purpose of balking the fiends.[2]

The sanctity of the threshold probably derived from the spirits which are supposed to haunt it.

All these various customs are intelligible if the threshold is believed to be haunted by spirits, which at critical seasons must be propitiated by persons who enter or leave the house. The same belief would explain why in so many lands people under certain circumstances have been careful to avoid contact with the threshold, and why in some places that avoidance has been enforced by warders stationed for the purpose at the doorway. Such warders may well have been the Keepers of the Threshold in the temple at Jerusalem, though no notice of the duties which they discharged has been preserved in the Old Testament.

[1] F. S. Krauss, *Volksglaube und religiöser Brauch der Südslaven* (Münster i. W., 1890), p. 154.

[2] See below, pp. 169 *sqq.*

CHAPTER XIII

THE BIRD-SANCTUARY

IN the eighty-fourth Psalm we read, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out unto the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God." Birds nesting on the altars at Jerusalem.

These words seem to imply that birds might build their nests and roost unmolested within the precincts and even upon the very altars of the temple at Jerusalem. There is no improbability in the supposition that they were really allowed to do so; for the Greeks in like manner respected the birds which had built their nests on holy ground. We learn this from Herodotus. He tells us that when the rebel Pactyas, the Lydian, fled from the wrath of Cyrus and took refuge with the Greeks of Cyme, the oracle of Apollo commanded his hosts to surrender the fugitive to the vengeance of the angry king. Thinking it impossible that the god could be so merciless, we may almost say so inhuman, as to bid them betray to his ruthless enemies the man who had put his trust in them, one of the citizens of Cyme, by name Aristodicus, repaired to the sanctuary of Apollo, and there going round the temple he tore down the nests of the sparrows and all the other birds which had built their little houses within the sacred place. Thereupon, we are told, a voice was heard from the Holy of Holies saying, "Most impious of men, how dare you do so? how dare you wrench my suppliants from my temple?" To which Aristodicus promptly Birds unmolested in the sanctuary of Apollo.

retorted, "So you defend your own suppliants, O Lord, but you order the people of Cyme to betray theirs?"[1]

Sacred sparrows at Athens and pigeons at Hierapolis.

Again, we read in Aelian that the Athenians put a man to death for killing a sacred sparrow of Aesculapius.[2] In the great sanctuary of the Syrian goddess at Hierapolis on the Euphrates, the pigeons were held to be most sacred, and no man might touch, far less molest or kill them. If any person accidentally touched a pigeon, he was deemed to be in a state of ceremonial pollution or taboo for the rest of that day. Hence the birds became perfectly tame, entering into people's houses and picking up their food on the ground.[3] We must remember that in antiquity the windows of temples as well as of houses were unglazed, so that birds could fly freely out and in, and build their nests, not only in the eaves, but in the interior of the sacred edifices. In his mockery of the heathen, the Christian Father, Clement of Alexandria, twits them with the disrespect shown to the greatest of their gods by swallows and other birds, which flew into the temples and defiled the images by their droppings.[4] To this day in remote parts of Greece, where windows are unglazed, swallows sometimes build their nests within the house and are not disturbed by the peasants. The first night I slept in Arcadia I was wakened in the morning by the swallows fluttering to and fro in the dark overhead, till the shutters were thrown open, the sunlight streamed in, and the birds flew out.

Free entrance of birds into ancient temples.

Immunity of birds in sacred places.

The reason for not molesting wild birds and their nests within the precincts of a temple was no doubt a belief that everything there was too sacred to be meddled with or removed. It is the same feeling which prompts the aborigines of Central Australia to spare any bird or beast that has taken refuge in one of the spots which these savages deem holy, because the most precious relics of their forefathers are there deposited in the holes and crannies of the rocks.[5] The divine protection thus extended to birds in the ancient world and particularly, as it would seem, in the

[1] Herodotus i. 157-159.
[2] Aelian, *Var. Hist.* v. 17.
[3] Lucian, *De dea Syria*, 54.
[4] Clement of Alexandria, *Protrept.* iv. 52, p. 46, ed. Potter.
[5] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1899), pp. 134 *sq.* As to these holy spots see above, vol. ii. pp. 508 *sq.*

temple at Jerusalem, lends fresh tenderness to the beautiful saying of Christ,[1] "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." We may, perhaps, please ourselves by imagining that these words were spoken within the sacred precinct at Jerusalem, while the temple sparrows fluttered and twittered in the sunshine about the speaker.

[1] Matthew x. 29.

CHAPTER XIV

ELIJAH AND THE RAVENS

Elijah fed by ravens beside the brook Cherith.

ACCORDING to the Hebrew historian, the first mission entrusted by God to the great prophet Elijah was to go to Ahab, king of Israel, and announce to him that neither dew nor rain should fall on the land for several years. But having discharged his divine commission, the ambassador of the deity was not left to perish in the long drought. For the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." So Elijah went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. But it came to pass after a while that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.[1]

The brook Cherith traditionally identified with the Wady Kelt.

The brook Cherith has been traditionally identified with the Wady Kelt, which descends eastward from the highlands of Judea and opens out on the plain of the Jordan not far from Jericho. Whether the identification is historically correct or not, there can be no doubt that the scene is eminently appropriate to the legend. The glen is one of the wildest and most romantic in Palestine. It is a tremendous gorge cleft through the mountains, shut in by sheer precipices, and so narrow that the bottom scarcely measures twenty yards across. There the stream forces its way through brakes of cane, rushes, and oleanders, the strip of

The scenery of the glen.

[1] 1 Kings xvii.

verdure contrasting with the nakedness of the rocky walls on all sides. In its depth and narrowness the ravine reminds the traveller of the famous defile which leads through the red cliffs to Petra. A magnificent view into the glen is obtained from some points on the road which leads down from Jerusalem into the valley of the Jordan. After traversing for hours the almost total desolation which marks that long descent through the bare, torrent-furrowed limestone hills, the wayfarer is refreshed by the sight of the green thread far below, and by the murmurous sound of water which comes up, even on autumn days after the parching drought of summer, from the depths of the profound ravine. Peering over the giddy brink he may see ravens, eagles, and huge griffon-vultures wheeling beneath him.

The ravens and other birds of the glen.

To this wild solitude, where water seldom fails throughout the year, the prophet Elijah may well have retired to wear out the years of drought which he foresaw and foretold, and there he may have tarried with no neighbours but the wild beasts and the wild birds. The glen and its inhabitants can have changed but little since his time. The ibex still haunts its rocks; the kingfisher still flutters over its deep pools; the wild pigeon still nests in the clefts of the crags; and the black grackle still suns its golden wings above them. But if the prophet was the first, he was not the last anchorite who has sought a refuge from the world in the depths of this savage ravine. Here and there, in seemingly inaccessible situations, the face of the cliffs is pierced with caverns, once the homes of pious hermits but now tenanted only by ravens, eagles, and vultures.

The view from the road at the mouth of the gorge.

The great gorge opens abruptly on the plain of the Jordan through a natural gateway composed of a conical peak of white chalk on either hand. Here a turn in the road from Jerusalem suddenly unrolls one of the finest panoramas in Southern Palestine. It is the point at which the road begins to wind steeply down the last descent into the plain. At his feet the traveller beholds a verdant forest, its rank luxuriance fed by the water of the glen and by some copious springs which burst from the limestone rock a little farther to the north. That forest of living green, the haunt of innumerable nightingales and of birds of gorgeous

plumage—the Indian blue kingfisher and the lovely little sun-bird, resplendent in metallic green and purple and blue —occupies the site of Jericho, the City of Palms. Beyond it stretches the long brown expanse of the desolate plain, broken in the distance by a dark green line of trees, which marks the deep bed of the Jordan. Still farther off rise the verdurous wooded slopes of Moab, with the long, even range of the mountains standing out sharp and clear above them. To the north is seen Mount Quarantana, the traditional site of the Temptation, a conical hill ascending in rocky terraces and crowned by a ruined chapel. Away to the south stretch the calm blue waters of the Dead Sea shut in by its desolate mountains. If, on quitting his hermitage in the glen, the prophet Elijah set his face to go to Jerusalem, such must have been the prospect which met his gaze, when, after toiling up the steep winding path, he paused to rest and look behind him, before continuing the long ascent to the city.[1]

The ravens at Jerusalem.

The story of the feeding of Elijah by the ravens may well have been suggested by the presence of the birds in the Wady Kelt, for ravens, as we have seen, still make their nests in the gorge and can be seen sailing above it. Indeed the bird appears to obtrude itself on the attention of the traveller all over the desolate region which extends from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea. "Of all the birds of Jerusalem," says Canon Tristram, "the raven tribe are the most characteristic and conspicuous, though the larger species is quite outnumbered by its smaller companion, *Corvus umbrinus*. They are present everywhere to eye and ear, and the odours that float around remind us of their use. The discordant jabber of their evening sittings round the temple area is deafening. The caw of the rook and the chatter of the jackdaw unite in attempting to drown the hoarse croak of the old raven, but clear above the tumult rings out the more musical call-note of hundreds of the lesser species. We used to watch this great colony as, every morning at day-

[1] Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine*, Second Edition (London, 1856), i. 557 *sq.*; A. P. Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine* (London, 1856), pp. 303 *sqq.*; W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book* (London, 1859), p. 622; H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*, Fourth Edition (London, 1882), pp. 194 *sqq.*, 501; C. R. Conder, *Tent Work in Palestine*, New Edition (London, 1885), pp. 210 *sq.*; K. Baedeker, *Syria and Palestine*, Fourth Edition (Leipsic, 1906), p. 126.

break, they passed in long lines over our tents to the northward; the rooks in solid phalanx leading the way, and the ravens in loose order bringing up the rear, far out of shot. Before retiring for the night, popular assemblies of the most uproarious character were held in the trees of Mount Olivet and the Kedron, and not until after sunset did they withdraw in silence, mingled indiscriminately, to their roosting-places in the sanctuary.

The ravens at the Dead Sea.

"Even at the south end of the Dead Sea, where the ancient fortress of Masada overlooks a waterless, lifeless wilderness of salt-hills, the three species of raven were to be found; and during our sojourn under Jebel Usdum, the salt mountain, we constantly saw the great ravens perched on the salt cliffs; though what, save a love of desolation, could have brought them there, it were hard to guess. Once, on the east side of the Dead Sea, close to a recent battlefield, the sun was not above the horizon, when we watched a steady stream of carrion eaters, who had scented the battle from afar, beginning to set in from the south. 'Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together,' and the ravens also, for all the vultures, kites, and ravens of North Arabia seemed to be rushing to the banquet."[1]

Prophetic power ascribed to ravens.

But there was a special propriety in the employment of ravens to minister to the prophet in the wilderness; for the raven has often been regarded as a bird of omen and even as itself endowed with prophetic power. Thus the Greeks esteemed the bird sacred to Apollo, the god of prophecy, and Greek augurs drew omens from its croaking.[2] Moreover, persons who desired to gain the power of divination used to eat the hearts of ravens, believing that they thereby acquired the raven's prophetic soul.[3] The Romans thought that a raven, stalking up and down on the sands and croaking, was calling for rain.[4] In some parts of Europe the raven is still deemed ominous of death.[5] The Lillooet

[1] H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*, Ninth Edition (London, 1898), pp. 200 *sq.*

[2] Aelian, *De natura animalium*, i. 48.

[3] Porphyry, *De abstinentia*, ii. 48.

[4] Virgil, *Georgics*, i. 388 *sq.*

[5] Rev. Charles Swainson, *The Folk-lore and Provincial Names of British Birds* (London, 1886), pp. 89 *sq.*

"*The raven himself is hoarse*
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements."

Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act i. Scene 5.

Speaking of the "philosophick financiers" of the French Revolution, Burke

Indians of British Columbia imagine that he who has a raven for his guardian spirit possesses the gift of prophecy, and that he can especially foretell death and the weather.[1] Indeed the raven is the principal figure in the myths current among the Indian tribes of North-Western America.[2]

The sagacity of the raven and its relation to man.

The sagacity and solemn deportment of this sable bird may have had much to do with throwing a glamour of mystery and sanctity about it. According to an eminent authority the raven is "probably the most highly developed of all birds. Quick-sighted, sagacious, and bold, it must have followed the prehistoric fisher and hunter, and generally without molestation from them, to prey on the refuse of their spoils, just as it now waits, with the same intent, on the movements of their successors; while it must have likewise attended the earliest herdsmen, who could not have regarded it with equal indifference, since its now notorious character for attacking and putting to death a weakly animal was doubtless in those days manifested. Yet the raven is no mere dependent upon man, being always able to get a living for itself; and, moreover, a sentiment of veneration or superstition has from very remote ages and among many races of men attached to it—a sentiment so strong as often to overcome the feeling of distrust not to say of hatred which its deeds inspired, and, though rapidly decreasing, even to survive in some places until the present time."[3]

Popular respect for a raven in ancient Rome.

Pliny tells a story which strikingly illustrates the veneration in which the raven was popularly held at Rome, when Rome was at the height of her glory. Under the reign of Tiberius it happened that a pair of ravens had built their nest on the roof of the temple of Castor and Pollux. One

says that "their voice is as harsh and as ominous as that of the raven" (*Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in *The Works of Edmund Burke*, New Edition, London, 1801–1827, vol. v. p. 466).

[1] James Teit, *The Lillooet Indians* (Leyden and New York, 1906), p. 283 (*The Jesup North Pacific Expedition*, vol. ii. Part v. *Memoir of the American Museum of Natural History, New York*).

[2] See for example A. Krause, *Die Tlinkit-Indianer* (Jena, 1885), pp. 253 *sqq.*; Franz Boas, *Indianische Sagen von der Nord-Pacifischen Küste Amerikas* (Berlin, 1895), pp. 76 *sqq.*, 105 *sqq.*, 170 *sqq.*, 208 *sqq.*, 232 *sqq.*, 241 *sqq.*, 272 *sqq.*, 306 *sqq.*, 311 *sqq.*

[3] Alfred Newton, *Dictionary of Birds* (London, 1893–1896), p. 766. On the destructive habit of ravens, see P. J. Mackay, *The Keeper's Book*[12] (Glasgow and London, 1917), pp. 137 *sq.*

of the young birds in time flew down, stalked into a shoemaker's shop, and took up its quarters there, the shoemaker not venturing to molest a creature which he looked upon with religious awe, partly perhaps for its own sake and partly for the sake of the holy place where it had been hatched. Every morning the sagacious bird flew out of the shop, perched on the rostra in the forum, and there in a distinct voice saluted the emperor and his two sons, Drusus and Germanicus, by name, after which he greeted in an affable manner the people passing to their business. Having discharged these offices of civility he returned to the shop. This he continued to do regularly for many years, till at last another shoemaker in the neighbourhood killed the bird, either out of spite, as was suspected, at the custom which the raven brought to his rival, or, as the shoemaker himself alleged, in a fit of passion because the bird had befouled the shoes in his shop. Whatever his motive, it was a bad day's work for him; for the people, thunderstruck at the death of their old favourite, rose in their wrath, drove the corbicidal shoemaker from his shop, and never rested till they had the miscreant's blood. As for the dead raven, it received a public funeral, which was attended by thousands. The bier was supported on the shoulders of two Ethiopians as black as the corpse they carried; a flute-player marched in front discoursing solemn music, while wreaths of flowers of all sorts, carried in the procession, testified to the general respect and sorrow for the deceased. In this impressive manner the funeral cortege made its way to the pyre, which had been erected two miles out on the Appian Way. The historian concludes by remarking that the bird received a grander funeral than many a prince before him, and that the death of the fowl was more signally avenged than the murder of Scipio Africanus.[1]

The raven's power of imitating the human voice.

Among the qualities which have procured for the raven a certain degree of popular veneration may be its power of imitating the human voice. That power is attested not only by Pliny's anecdote but by modern writers. Thus Goldsmith affirms that "a raven may be reclaimed to almost every purpose to which birds can be converted. He may

[1] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* x. 121-123.

be trained up for fowling like an hawk; he may be taught to fetch and carry like a spaniel; he may be taught to speak like a parrot; but the most extraordinary of all is, that he can be taught to sing like a man. I have heard a raven sing the Black Joke with great distinctness, truth, and humour."[1] And Yarrell, in his *History of British Birds*, writes, "Among British birds, the power of imitating the sounds of the human voice is possessed in the greatest perfection by the raven, the magpie, the jay, and the starling. In proof of this power in the raven, many anecdotes might be repeated; the two following, derived from unquestionable authorities, are perhaps less known than many others: 'Ravens have been taught to articulate short sentences as distinctly as any parrot. One, belonging to Mr. Henslow, of St. Alban's, speaks so distinctly that, when we first heard it, we were actually deceived in thinking it was a human voice: and there is another at Chatham which has made equal proficiency; for, living within the vicinity of a guard-house, it has more than once turned out the guard, who thought they were called by the sentinel on duty.'"[2]

The raven as a bird of prey.

It is possible, too, that the raven's habit of preying on the human dead may have helped to invest it with an atmosphere of mystery and awe; for as savages commonly suppose that they themselves can acquire the desirable properties of the dead by eating some part of their corpses, so they may have imagined that birds of prey, which batten on the slain, absorb thereby the wisdom and other qualities which the dead men possessed in their lifetime. Similarly,

Veneration of East African tribes for the hyena as the animal which devours their dead.

the superstitious veneration in which the hyena is held by many tribes of East Africa appears to arise in large measure from the custom, which these tribes observe, of exposing their dead to be devoured by hyenas. For example, the Nandi, who follow that practice, hold hyenas in great respect, and believe that the animals talk like human beings and converse with the spirits of the dead. When several children in one family have died, the parents will place a newly-born babe for a few minutes in a path along which

[1] Oliver Goldsmith, *History of the Earth and of Animated Nature* (Dublin, 1776), v. 226.

[2] William Yarrell, *History of British Birds* (London, 1843), ii. 68 *sq.*

hyenas are known to walk, hoping that the brutes will intercede for the child with the spirits of the dead and induce them to spare its life. If such a child lives, it receives the name of Hyena.[1] Similarly the Bagesu and the Wanyamwesi, two other tribes of East Africa who throw out their dead to be devoured by hyenas, regard these animals as sacred and often take the cry of a hyena in the evening to be the voice of the last person who died in the neighbourhood. The Wanyamwesi say that they could not kill a hyena, because they do not know whether the creature might not be a relation of theirs, an aunt, a grandmother, or what not.[2] These beliefs appear to imply that the souls of the dead are reborn in the hyenas which devour their bodies. Thus the practice of exposing the dead, combined with the belief in the transmigration of human souls into animal bodies, may suffice to establish an imaginary kinship between men and beasts and birds of prey, such as hyenas, eagles, vultures, and ravens. How far its predatory habits have contributed to surround the raven in particular with that degree of respect which it enjoys among the vulgar, is a question which might be worth considering.

Kinship perhaps supposed to exist between men and the beasts and birds of prey which batten on corpses.

[1] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), pp. 7, 70 *sq.*

[2] *Totemism and Exogamy*, iv. 305, from information furnished by the Rev. John Roscoe. In his account of the Bagesu (*The Northern Bantu*, Cambridge, 1915, pp. 159 *sqq.*) Mr. Roscoe has omitted to record these beliefs concerning the hyena.

CHAPTER XV

SACRED OAKS AND TEREBINTHS

The oak and the terebinth in Palestine.

AMONG the sacred trees of the ancient Hebrews the oak and the terebinth seem to have held a foremost place. Both are still common in Palestine. The two trees are very different in kind, but their general similarity of appearance is great, and accordingly they appear to have been confused, or at least classed together, by the ancient Hebrews, who bestowed very similar names upon them. In particular passages of the Old Testament it is not always easy to determine whether the reference is to an oak or to a terebinth.[1]

Three species of oaks in Palestine. The prickly evergreen oak (*Quercus pseudo-coccifera*).

Three species of oaks are common in Palestine at the present time.[2] Of these the most abundant is the prickly evergreen oak (*Quercus pseudo-coccifera*). In general appearance and in the colour of its leaves this oak closely resembles the holm oak of our own country, but the leaves are prickly and very different in shape, being more like holly leaves. The natives call it *sindiân*, while *ballout* is their generic name for all the species of oak.[3] This prickly evergreen oak "is by far the most abundant tree throughout Syria, covering the rocky hills, of Palestine especially, with a dense brushwood of trees 8-12 feet high, branching from the base, thickly covered with small evergreen rigid leaves, and bearing acorns copiously. On Mount Carmel it forms nine-tenths of the shrubby vegetation, and it is almost equally abundant on the west flanks of the Anti-Lebanon and many slopes

[1] A. P. Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, Second Edition (London, 1856), pp. 139, 515 *sqq.*; H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*, Ninth Edition (London, 1898), p. 367.

[2] (Sir) J. D. Hooker, "On Three Oaks of Palestine," *Transactions of the Linnaean Society of London*, xxiii. (1862) pp. 381-387.

[3] H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*, pp. 368, 369 *sq.*

and valleys of Lebanon. Even in localities where it is not now seen, its roots are found in the soil, and dug up for fuel, as in the valleys to the south of Bethlehem. Owing to the indiscriminate destruction of the forests in Syria, this oak rarely attains its full size."[1]

The Valonia oak (*Quercus aegilops*).

The second species of oak in Palestine is the Valonia oak (*Quercus aegilops*). It is deciduous and very much resembles our English oak in general appearance and growth, never forming a bush or undergrowth, but rising on a stout gnarled trunk, from three to seven feet in girth, to a height of from twenty to thirty feet. The foliage is dense, and the trees, occurring for the most part in open glades, give a park-like appearance to the landscape. Rare in the south, it is very common in the north. It is scattered over Carmel, abounds on Tabor, and forms a forest to the north of that mountain. In Bashan it almost supplants the prickly-leaved evergreen oak, and is no doubt the oak of Bashan to which the Hebrew prophets refer as a type of pride and strength;[2] for in that country the tree attains a magnificent size, especially in the lower valleys. Its very large acorns are eaten by the natives, while the acorn cups are used by dyers under the name of Valonia and are largely exported.[3]

Third species of oak (*Quercus infectoria*).

The third species of oak in Palestine (*Quercus infectoria*) is also deciduous; its leaves are very white on the under surface. It is not so common as the other two species, but it grows on Carmel and occurs in abundance near Kedes, the ancient Kedesh Naphtali. The abundance of spherical galls, of a deep red-brown colour and shining viscid surface, make the tree very conspicuous. Canon Tristram saw no large specimens of this oak anywhere and none at all south of Samaria.[4]

Distribution of oak woods in modern Palestine.

It may not be amiss to illustrate the distribution, and to some extent the luxuriance, of the oak woods of modern Palestine by a few quotations from writers who travelled in that country during the nineteenth century and described

[1] (Sir) J. D. Hooker, "On Three Oaks of Palestine," *Transactions of the Linnaean Society of London*, xxiii. (1862) p. 382.

[2] Isaiah ii. 13; Zechariah xi. 2.

[3] (Sir) J. D. Hooker, *op. cit.* p. 385; H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*, p. 370.

[4] (Sir) J. D. Hooker, *op. cit.* p. 384; H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*, p. 371.

what they saw. These descriptions may help to correct the common conception of the Holy Land as an arid and almost treeless region.

The oak woods of Sharon, the Enchanted Forest of Tasso.

Thus, for example, speaking of the plain of Sharon, which is interposed between the inhospitable sandy shore of the Mediterranean and the hills of Samaria, Thomson says, "The sandy downs, with their pine bushes, are falling back towards the sea, giving place to a firmer soil, upon which stand here and there venerable oak-trees, like patriarchs of by-gone generations left alone in the wilderness. They are the beginning of the largest and most impressive oak forest in western Palestine. It extends northwards to the eastern base of Carmel, and, with slight interruptions, it continues along the western slopes of Galilee quite to the lofty Jermŭk, west of Safet. I have spent many days in wandering through those vast oak glades. The scenery is becoming quite park-like and very pretty. The trees are all of one kind, and apparently very old. The Arabic name for this species of oak is *sindiân*—a large evergreen tree whose botanical name is *Quercus pseudo-coccifera*. There are other varieties of the oak interspersed occasionally with these, but the prevailing tree everywhere is the noble, venerable, and solemn *sindiân*. . . . On one occasion I spent a night, for the sake of protection, at a village a few miles north-east of these mills called Sindiâneh—the name no doubt derived from the oak woods which surround it. I had a delightful ramble early the next morning in those grand old forests, and then understood perfectly how Absalom could be caught by the thick branches of an oak. The strong arms of these trees spread out so near the ground that one cannot walk erect beneath them; and on a frightened mule such a head of hair as that vain but wicked son polled every year would certainly become inextricably entangled."[1] In antiquity these woods of Sharon were known as the Forest or the Oak Forest, and they are the Enchanted Forest of Tasso.[2]

[1] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Southern Palestine and Jerusalem* (London, 1881), pp. 60 *sq.*; compare *id.*, p. 79. "A thick forest of oak extends between Carmel and Nazareth" (C. R. Conder, *Tent Work in Palestine*, New Edition, London, 1885, p. 367).

[2] (Sir) George Adam Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (London, 1894), pp. 147 *sq.*

Again, referring to the Wady 'Abilîn on the confines of Zebulun and Asher, Thomson says, "It is conducting us through a grand avenue of magnificent oaks, whose grateful shade is refreshing to the weary traveller. They are part of an extensive forest which covers most of the hills southward to the plain of Esdraelon. There is hardly a more agreeable ride in the country than through this noble oak wood from Shefa 'Omar to Seffûrieh. Many of the trees are very large, and by their great age indicate that this region was not much cultivated." [1] As to this forest Canon Tristram writes, "The scenery was park-like, though man was wanting everywhere, and we often cantered through open glades, under noble oaks and wild olives, or over shelving rocks of limestone. This was the first time we had met with any natural forest of old timber, and accordingly the black-headed jay (*Garrulus melanocephalus*, Bp.), and the pretty spotted woodpecker (*Picus syriacus*, H. and Ehrenb.) were added to our list. Perhaps nothing could give the naturalist a clearer idea of the scarcity of large timber in Syria than the fact that this is the only species of that cosmopolitan genus, the woodpecker, which has been discovered in the country." [2] The northern side of the Mount of Precipitation, near Nazareth, "is well clad with forest; its southern is only sparsely dotted with shrubby trees, nowhere crowded, generally the dwarf oak (*Quercus aegilops*, L. var.), with a few evergreen ilices interspersed." [3]

The oak woods of Zebulun and Asher.

Again, the romantic scenery of Banias, the Syrian Tivoli, where the Jordan bursts full-born from the red sandstone cliff at the foot of the snow-crowned Mount Hermon, owes much of its charm to forests and clumps of grand oaks. [4] Canon Tristram describes an evergreen oak at the village of Libbeya in this neighbourhood as the most magnificent tree

The oak woods of Banias, at the source of the Jordan.

[1] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, p. 302. However, since Thomson wrote, the destruction of the forests in Western Palestine would seem to have advanced apace. See H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*,[9] p. 7.

[2] H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*,[4] p. 116.

[3] H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*,[4] p. 121.

[4] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, pp. 440, 464, 467, 469, 470, 473, 481, 484, 485, 494; H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*,[4] pp. 572, 573, 577, 578. For the scenery, compare A. P. Stanley, *Syria and Palestine*, pp. 392 *sqq.*

he ever remembered to have seen. At a little distance he and his friends could hardly believe that it was a single tree. "Abraham's and the Penshanger oaks are shabby in comparison. It is one symmetrical tree in the heyday of its prime; its wide-spreading roots gather together into a pedestal, which at the height of six feet sends forth more than a dozen lateral branches, each a fine piece of timber in itself. At four feet from the ground, the narrowest part, where its waist is tightly and most fashionably compressed, it measured thirty-seven feet in circumference. The branches extend with perfect symmetry, forming a true circle and a dome without flaw or break, covering a circumference of ninety-one yards, everywhere reaching down to within five feet of the ground, as though trimmed artificially to that height by the browsing of cattle."[1]

Oak woods to the east of the Jordan.

Passing now to the east of the Jordan, we are told of Ard el Bathanyeh, the ancient Batanea, that "the whole of the province is exceedingly picturesque. The mountains are well wooded with forests of evergreen oaks, and the sides terraced."[2] Again, in describing the Decapolis, Thomson writes, "We have been following along the remains of a Roman road, and now we are entering a beautiful forest of evergreen oaks which seems to extend a great distance over the range of Jebel Haurân. Kŭnawât itself is surrounded by it, and many of the ruins are embowered beneath wide-spreading *sindiân* trees, as these scrub-oaks are called by the natives, and here and there some of the columns are seen rising above the dense foliage."[3] Farther on he says: "The country between our line of travel and the valley of the Jordan northward and westward is wild and mountainous, and in some parts it is well wooded with noble oak forests. It is the region of the ancient Decapolis."[4] Of the land beyond Jordan eastward Tristram writes, "In the north, we find an open plain eastward, extending to the Lejah (Trachonitis), and farther Bashan, and westward the range is dotted with

The oak woods of the Decapolis.

The oaks of Bashan.

[1] H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*,[4] pp. 594 *sq*.

[2] Dr. Porter, quoted by W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, p. 441.

[3] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, p. 481; compare pp. 494, 497.

[4] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, p. 546.

noble oaks, rather park-like than in the form of dense forest, deciduous in the lower grounds, and evergreen on the higher ranges. Among these roam the flocks and herds of the wandering Bedouin. Next, in Gilead, we come to a more densely-wooded region, a true forest in places, the tops of the higher range covered with noble pines; then a zone of evergreen oaks, with arbutus, myrtle, and other shrubs intermixed; lower down, the deciduous oak is the predominant tree, mixed with wild olive (*Celtis Australis*), and many other semi-tropical trees, which, in their turn, yield, as we descend into the Jordan valley, to the jujube, or *Zizyphus*, the oleaster, and the palm."[1]

The oak woods of Gilead.

Of these beautiful woods of Gilead, where the famous balm was obtained, Thomson says, "We have now reached the regular road from el Husn to Sûf and Jerash, and will have the shade of this noble forest of oak, pine, and other trees for the rest of the ride. There is not a breath of air in these thick woods, and the heat is most oppressive both to ourselves and our weary animals. . . . Up to this point—an hour and a half from el Husn—much of the country is cultivated, but from this on to Sûf the forest is uninterrupted, and is composed mostly of evergreen oaks, interspersed occasionally with pines, terebinth and hawthorn. . . . From Um el Khanzîr to Sûf is nearly two hours, and in spring nothing can be more delightful than a ride through these forests, the grandest in this land of Gilead; and we need not wonder at the encomiums lavished by all travellers that have passed this way on the beautiful woodland scenery of these regions, for even the most enthusiastic have not said enough in its praise."[2] "After leaving the olive groves of Sûf we shall be overshadowed by an uninterrupted forest of venerable oak and other evergreen trees for more than an hour to 'Ain-Jenneh. . . . These forests extend a great distance to the north and south, and a large part of the country might be brought under cultivation by clearing away the trees. The substratum is everywhere limestone, the soil is naturally fertile, and in the spring of the year the surface is clothed

[1] H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*,[9] p. 8.

[2] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, p. 555. Compare J. L. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land* (London, 1822), p. 348.

with luxuriant pasture. 'Jebel Ajlun,' says Dr. Eli Smith, 'presents the most charming rural scenery that I have seen in Syria; a continued forest of noble trees, chiefly the evergreen oak, *sindiân*, covers a large part of it, while the ground beneath is clothed with luxuriant grass, a foot or more in height, and decked with a rich variety of wild flowers.'"[1] "Next day we left Tibneh. Our course lay over the highest tract of Gilead, Jebel Ajlûn, leaving the peak to our right, and descending into the upper waters of the Jabbok. We had a magnificent ride through forests of Turkey and evergreen oak, interspersed with open glades here and there, and crowned with noble pine-trees (*Pinus carica*, Don.) on the higher parts. Everywhere the ground was covered with rich herbage and lovely flowers; wood pigeons (*Columba palumbus*, L.) rose in clouds from the oaks, and jays and woodpeckers screamed in every glade. There seem to be five varieties of oak, two deciduous and three evergreen, but they may all be reduced to two species (*Quercus pseudo-coccifera* and *Q. aegilops*). The latter predominated, and generally the different species were grouped in separate clumps, giving the whole the effect of one vast park. The trees were often of great size, and in the outskirts of the glades of noble proportions, with wide-spreading branches."[2] "Then we rose to the higher ground, and cantered through a noble forest of oaks. Perhaps we were in the woods of Mahanaim. Somewhere a little to the east of us was fought the battle with the rebellious Absalom, and by such an oak as these was he caught. How we realised the statement, 'The battle was there scattered over the face of all the country, and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured,'[3] in picturing the broken lines and a rout through such an open forest. As I rode under a grand oak-tree, I too lost my hat and turban, which were caught by a bough. The oaks were just now putting forth their catkins and tender leaves."[4] "Immediately beyond Khirbet Sâr we began to descend into Wady es Seir by a very steep path,

The woods of Mahanaim. Absalom and the oak.

[1] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, pp. 574 *sq.*; compare p. 582.

[2] H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*,[4] p. 463.

[3] 2 Samuel xviii. 8.

[4] H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*,[4] pp. 453 *sq.*

through a magnificent forest of large oak-trees. That valley is very beautiful, and the mountains rise higher and higher on either side, covered to their summits with thick groves of evergreen oaks, terebinths, and other trees." [1]

The ruined castle of Hyreanus.

Not far off, in a rocky amphitheatre commanding a wide prospect westward, and backed on all other sides by wooded hills and jagged limestone crags, are the ruins of the castle which Hyrcanus, one of the Maccabean princes, built for himself and adorned with spacious gardens, when he retired in dudgeon to live in rural solitude far from the intrigues and tumults of Jerusalem. He was a wise man to choose so fair a spot for his retirement from the world. The neighbouring glen, the cliffs, the hill-sides wooded with oaks and terebinths, and the green undulating slopes below, make up a lovely landscape, especially in spring when the oleanders convert the bed of the purling stream into a sheet of rosy bloom.[2]

Superstitious veneration of oaks in Palestine.

The oaks which thus abound in many parts of Palestine are still often regarded with superstitious veneration by the peasantry. Thus, speaking of a fine oak grove near the Lake of Phiala in northern Palestine, Thomson remarks, "These oaks under which we now sit are believed to be inhabited by Jân and other spirits. Almost every village in these wadys and on those mountains has one or more of such thick oaks, which are sacred from the same superstition. Many of them in this region are believed to be inhabited by certain spirits, called *Benât Ya'kôb*— daughters of Jacob — a strange and obscure notion, in regard to which I could never obtain an intelligible explanation. It seems to be a relic of ancient idolatry, which the stringent laws of Muhammed banished in form, but could not entirely eradicate from the minds of the multitude. Indeed, the Moslems are as stupidly given to such superstitions as any class of the community. Connected with this notion, no doubt, is the custom of burying their holy men and so-called prophets under those trees, and erecting

Oaks thought to be haunted by spirits.

Oaks inhabited by the daughters of Jacob.

Saints buried under the trees.

[1] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, p. 594.

[2] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, p. 596; H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*,[4] pp. 517 *sqq.* As to Hyrcanus and his castle, see Josephus, *Antiquit. Jud.* xii. 4. 11.

muzârṣ [domed shrines] to them there. All non-Christian sects believe that the spirits of these saints love to return to this world, and especially to visit the place of their tombs. . . . I have witnessed some ludicrous displays of daring enacted about such old trees by native Protestants just emancipated from this superstition; and I can point to many people who have been all their lives long, and are still, held in bondage through fear of those imaginary spirits.

The oak and the terebinth: abundance of the oak in Palestine.

"Scarcely any tree figures more largely in Biblical narrative and poetry than the oak; but I observe that certain modern critics contend that it is, after all, not the oak, but the terebinth. The criticism is not quite so sweeping as that. It is merely attempted to prove, I believe, that the Hebrew word *elâh*, which in our version is generally rendered oak, should be translated terebinth. *Allon*, they say, is the true name of the oak. The Hebrew writers seem to use these names indiscriminately for the same tree or for different varieties of it, and that tree was the oak. For example, the tree in which Absalom was caught by the hair is called *elâh*, not the *allon*; and yet I am persuaded it was an oak. The battlefield on that occasion was on the mountains east of the Jordan, always celebrated for great oaks. I see it asserted by the advocates of this rendering that the oak is not a common or very striking tree in this country, implying that the terebinth is. A greater mistake could scarcely be made. Besides the oak groves north of Tabor, and in Gilead, Bashan, Hermon, and Lebanon, there are the forests, extending thirty miles at least along the hills west of Nazareth to Carmel on the north, and from there southward beyond Caesarea Palestina. To maintain, therefore, that the oak is not a striking or abundant tree in Palestine is a piece of critical hardihood tough as the tree itself."[1]

Sacred oak groves in northern Syria.

At the romantic village of Bludan, a favourite retreat of the people of Damascus in the heat of summer, there are "remains of an old temple of Baal; and the grove of aged oaks on the slope beneath it is still a place held in

[1] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, pp. 474-476.

superstitious veneration by the villagers."[1] "In the *W. Barado*, near Damascus, where certain heathenish festival customs do yet remain amongst the Moslemîn, I have visited two groves of evergreen oaks, which are *wishing-places* for the peasantry. If anything fall to them for which they vowed, they will go to the one on a certain day in the year to break a crock there; or they lay up a new stean in a little cave which is under a rock at the other. There I have looked in, and saw it full to the entry of their yet whole offering-pots: in that other grove you will see the heap of their broken potsherds."[2] Another sacred grove of oaks is at Beinu in northern Syria. A ruined Greek church stands among the trees.[3] Again, we are told that "in a Turkish village in northern Syria, there is a large and very old oak-tree, which is regarded as sacred. People burn incense to it, and bring their offerings to it, precisely in the same way as to some shrine. There is no tomb of any saint in its neighbourhood, but the people worship the tree itself."[4]

Sacred oaks beside the supposed tombs of Moham-medan saints.

Very often these venerated oaks are found growing singly or in groves beside one of those white-domed chapels or supposed tombs of Mohammedan saints, which may be seen from one end of Syria to the other. Many such white domes and green groves crown the tops of hills. "Yet no one knows when, by whom, or for what special reason they first became consecrated shrines. Many of them are dedicated to the patriarchs and prophets, a few to Jesus and the apostles; some bear the names of traditionary heroes, and others appear to honour persons, places, and incidents of merely local interest. Many of these 'high places' have probably come down from remote ages, through all the mutations of dynasties and religions, unchanged to the present day. We can believe this the more readily because some of them are now frequented by the oldest communities in the country, and those opposed to each other—Arabs of the desert, Muhammedans, Metawîleh, Druses, Christians, and even Jews. We may have, therefore, in those 'high

[1] H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*[4], p. 614.

[2] C. M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (Cambridge, 1888), i. 450.

[3] S. I. Curtiss, *Primitive Semitic Religion to-day* (Chicago, 1902), pp. 138 *sq.*

[4] S. I. Curtiss, *op. cit.* p. 94.

places under every green tree upon the high mountains and upon the hills,' not only sites of the very highest antiquity, but existing monuments, with their groves and domes, of man's ancient superstitions; and if that does not add to our veneration, it will greatly increase the interest with which we examine them. There is one of these 'high places,' with its groves of venerable oak-trees, on the summit of Lebanon, east of this village of Jezzin. The top of the mountain is of an oval shape, and the grove was planted regularly around it."[1]

The *Wely* or reputed tomb of a Mohammedan saint under an oak or other sacred tree.

To the same effect another writer, who long sojourned in the Holy Land, observes, "The traveller in Palestine will often see a little clump of trees with the white dome of a low stone building peeping out of the dark-green foliage, and on inquiring what it is will be told that is a *Wely*, or saint — that is, his reputed tomb. These buildings are usually, though not invariably, on the tops of hills, and can be seen for many miles round, some of them, indeed, forming landmarks for a great distance. Who these *Ouliah* were is for the most part lost in obscurity; but the real explanation is that they mark the site of some of the old Canaanitish high places, which we know, from many passages in the Old Testament, were not all destroyed by the Israelites when they took possession of the land, becoming in subsequent ages a frequent cause of sin to them. There is generally, but not always, a grove of trees round the Wely. The oak is the kind most commonly found in these groves at the present day, as would appear to have been also the case in Bible times, especially in the hill country. Besides the oak—which is invariably the evergreen kind, and not the deciduous species of our English woods—the terebinth, tamarisk, sidr, or nubk (the *Zizyphus-spina-Christi*, sometimes called *Dôm* by Europeans), and other trees, are to be seen as well. Occasionally the grove is represented by one large solitary tree under whose shade the Wely nestles. The shrine itself usually consists of a plain stone building, for the most part windowless, but having a *Mihrâb*, or prayer-niche. It is kept in fair repair as a rule, and white-

[1] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, pp. 169-171.

washed from time to time both inside and out. Occasionally a grave is to be found inside, under the dome, an ugly erection of stone plastered over, about three feet high, and frequently of abnormal length; that of the so-called grave of Joshua, near Es Salt, east of the Jordan, is over thirty feet in length."[1]

In like manner Captain Conder, speaking of the real, not the nominal, religion of the Syrian peasantry at the present day, writes as follows: "The professed religion of the country is Islam, the simple creed of 'one God, and one messenger of God'; yet you may live for months in the out-of-the-way parts of Palestine without seeing a mosque, or hearing the call of the Muedhen to prayer. Still the people are not without a religion which shapes every action of their daily life. . . . In almost every village in the country a small building surmounted by a whitewashed dome is observable, being the sacred chapel of the place; it is variously called *Kubbeh*, 'dome'; *Mazâr*, 'shrine'; or *Mukâm*, 'station,' the latter being a Hebrew word, used in the Bible for the 'places' of the Canaanites, which Israel was commanded to destroy 'upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree' (Deut. xii. 2.). Just as in the time of Moses, so now, the position chosen for the *Mukâm* is generally conspicuous. On the top of a peak, or on the back of a ridge, the little white dome gleams brightly in the sun; under the boughs of the spreading oak or terebinth; beside the solitary palm, or among the aged lotus-trees at a spring, one lights constantly on the low building, standing isolated, or surrounded by the shallow graves of a small cemetery. The trees besides the *Mukâms* are always considered sacred, and every bough which falls is treasured within the sacred building.

These shrines (*Mukâms*) under their sacred trees are the real objects of religious veneration among the peasantry of Palestine.

"The *Mukâms* are of very various degrees of importance; sometimes, as at Neby Jibrîn, there is only a plot of bare ground, with a few stones walling it in; or again, as at the Mosque of Abu Harîreh (a Companion of the Prophet), near Yebnah, the building has architectural pretensions, with inscriptions and ornamental stone-work. The

Description of the *Mukâms* or shrines.

[1] Rev. C. T. Wilson, *Peasant Life in the Holy Land* (London, 1906), pp. 25 *sq.*

typical. *Mukâm* is, however, a little building of modern masonry, some ten feet square, with a round dome, carefully whitewashed, and a *Mihrab* or prayer-niche on the south wall. The walls round the door, and the lintel-stone are generally adorned with daubs of orange-coloured henna, and a pitcher for water is placed beside the threshold to refresh the pilgrim. There is generally a small cenotaph within, directed with the head to the west, the body beneath being supposed to lie on its right side facing Mecca. A few old mats sometimes cover the floor, and a plough, or other object of value, is often found stored inside the *Mukâm*, where it is quite safe from the most daring thief, as none would venture to incur the displeasure of the saint in whose shrine the property has thus been deposited on trust.

Power ascribed to the saint or sheik of the shrines (*Mukâm*).

"This *Mukâm* represents the real religion of the peasant. It is sacred as the place where some saint is supposed once to have 'stood' (the name signifying 'standing-place'), or else it is consecrated by some other connection with his history. It is the central point from which the influence of the saint is supposed to radiate, extending in the case of a powerful Sheikh to a distance of perhaps twenty miles all round. If propitious, the Sheikh bestows good luck, health, and general blessings on his worshippers; if enraged, he will inflict palpable blows, distraction of mind, or even death. If a man seems at all queer in his manner, his fellow-villagers will say, 'Oh, the Sheikh has struck him!' and it is said that a peasant will rather confess a murder, taking his chance of escape, than forswear himself on the shrine of a reputed Sheikh, with the supposed certainty of being killed by spiritual agencies.

The mode of worship at the shrine (*Mukâm*).

"The *cultus* of the *Mukâm* is simple. There is always a guardian of the building; sometimes it is the civil Sheikh, or elder of the village, sometimes it is a Derwîsh, who lives near, but there is always some one to fill the water-pitcher, and to take care of the place. The greatest respect is shown to the chapel, where the invisible presence of the saint is supposed always to abide. The peasant removes his shoes before entering, and takes care not to tread on the threshold; he uses the formula, 'Your leave, O blessed one,' as he approaches, and he avoids any action which

might give offence to the *numen* of the place. When sickness prevails in a village, votive offerings are brought to the *Mukâm*, and I have often seen a little earthenware lamp brought down by some poor wife or mother, whose husband or child was sick, to be burnt before the shrine. A vow to the saint is paid by a sacrifice called *Kôd*, or 'requital,' a sheep being killed close to the *Mukâm*, and eaten at a feast in honour of the beneficent Sheikh." [1]

Sanctity of the trees at the shrines.

The fallen branches of the sacred trees, whether oaks, terebinths, tamarisks, or others, which grow beside these local sanctuaries, may not be used as fuel; the Mohammedans believe that were they to turn the sacred wood to such base uses, the curse of the saint would rest on them. Hence at these spots it is a curious sight, in a country where firewood is scarce, to see huge boughs lie rotting on the ground. Only at festivals in honour of the saints do the Moslems dare to burn the sacred lumber. The Christian peasants are less scrupulous; they sometimes surreptitiously employ the fallen branches to feed the fire on the domestic hearth.[2]

Antiquity of the worship at these "high places."

Thus the worship at the high places and green trees, which pious Hebrew kings forbade and prophets thundered against thousands of years ago, persists apparently in the same places to this day. So little is an ignorant peasantry affected by the passing of empires, by the moral and spiritual revolutions which change the face of the civilized world.

Modern examples of these local sanctuaries.

To take, now, some particular examples of these local sanctuaries. On a ridge near the lake of Phiala in northern Palestine, there is a knoll "covered with a copse of noble oak trees, forming a truly venerable grove, with a deep religious gloom." In the midst of the grove stands the

[1] C. R. Conder, *Tent Work in Palestine*, New Edition (London, 1885), pp. 304-306. On these shrines, the supposed tombs of saints (*welies*), and the custom of depositing property at them for safety, see further Selah Merrill, *East of the Jordan* (London, 1881), p. 497; F. Johnson, "Some Bedouin Customs," *Man*, xviii. (1918) p. 7. Of these writers, the former observes that "the property of the Arabs is frequently stored near one of these tombs, and is as safe as if it were under lock and key. No theft is ever committed within those sacred precincts. If a person should dare do such a thing, ministers of vengeance from the unseen world would follow him all the days of his life."

[2] C. T. Wilson, *Peasant Life in the Holy Land* (London, 1906), p. 28.

wely or shrine of Sheikh 'Othmân Hâzûry; it is merely a common Moslem tomb surrounded by a shabby stone wall. Just below, on one side of the knoll, is a small fountain which takes its name from the saint.[1] Again, on the summit of Jebel Osh'a, the highest mountain in Gilead, may be seen the reputed tomb of the prophet Hosea, shaded by a magnificent evergreen oak. The tomb is venerated alike by Moslems, Christians, and Jews. People used to come on pilgrimage to the spot to sacrifice, pray, and feast. The prospect from the summit is esteemed the finest in all Palestine, surpassing in beauty, though not in range, the more famous view from Mount Nebo, whence Moses just before death gazed on the Promised Land, which he was not to enter, lying spread out in purple lights and shadows across the deep valley of the Jordan.[2]

The tomb of Hosea.

Again, the reputed tomb of Abel, high up a cliff beside the river Abana in the Lebanon, is surrounded by venerable oak trees. It is a domed structure of the usual sort, and is a place of Mohammedan pilgrimage.[3] A similar association of tombs with trees is to be found at Tell el Kadi, "the mound of the judge," the ancient Dan, where the lower springs of the Jordan take their rise. The place is a natural mound of limestone rock some eighty feet high and half a mile across. It rises on the edge of a wide plain, below a long succession of olive yards and oak glades which slope down from Banias, where are the upper sources of the Jordan. The situation is very lovely. On the western side of the mound an almost impenetrable thicket of reeds, oaks, and oleanders is fed by the lower springs of the river, a wonderful fountain like a large bubbling basin, said to be the largest single fountain not only in Syria but in the world. On the eastern side of the

The tomb of Abel.

"The mound of the judge" at the source of the Jordan.

[1] Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine*, Second Edition (London, 1856), iii. 401; W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, p. 473.

[2] J. L. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land* (London, 1822), pp. 353 *sq.*; H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*,[4] pp. 546 *sq.*; W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, pp. 585 *sq.*; C. R. Conder, *Heth and Moab* (London, 1883), pp. 181-3. For the view from Mount Nebo, see H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*,[4] pp. 524-7; *id.*, *The Land of Moab*, Second Edition (London, 1874), pp. 325 *sq.*

[3] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, p. 350.

mound, overhanging another bright feeder of the Jordan, stand side by side two noble trees, a holm oak[1] and a terebinth, shading the graves of Moslem saints. Their branches are hung with rags and other trumpery offerings.[1]

Even when the hallowed oaks do not grow beside the tombs or shrines of saints they are often thus decorated with rags by the superstitious peasantry. Thus at Seilûn, the site of the ancient Shiloh "is a large and noble oak tree called Balûtat-Ibrahîm, Abraham's oak. It is one of the 'inhabited trees' so common in this country, and the superstitious peasants hang bits of rags on the branches to propitiate the mysterious beings that are supposed to 'inhabit' it."[2] "Some distance back we passed a cluster of large oak trees, and the lower branches of one of them were hung with bits of rag of every variety of shape and colour. What is the meaning of this ornamentation? That was one of the haunted or 'inhabited trees,' supposed to be the abode of evil spirits; and those bits of rags are suspended upon the branches to protect the wayfarer from their malign influence. There are many such trees in all parts of the country, and the superstitious inhabitants are afraid to sleep under them."[3] One of these haunted trees may be seen on the site of Old Beyrout. It is a venerable ever-

Sacred oak trees hung with votive rags.

[1] H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*,[4] pp. 572 *sq.*; W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, p. 459 (who does not mention the species of the trees). Baedeker speaks only of an oak (*Palestine and Syria*,[4] p. 259).

[2] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, p. 104. Of this custom, as practised in Syria, the late Professor S. I. Curtiss wrote as follows (*Primitive Semitic Religion To-day*, p. 91): "There are many trees, apart from shrines, which are believed to be possessed by spirits, to whom vows and sacrifices are made. Such trees are often hung with rags or bits of cloth. It is not easy to determine the significance of the rags. Some say they are intended to be a constant reminder to the saint of the petition of the worshipper, like a string tied round the finger; others that the rag taken from the ailing body of the suppliant, and tied to one of the branches, is designed to transfer the illness of the person represented by the rags to the saint, who thus takes it away from the sufferer and bears it vicariously himself. Sometimes the man who is ill takes a rag from the tree, as one tears off a bit of the pall from the cenotaph of the shrine, and carries it about on his person, and so enjoys the advantage of virtue from the saint." The custom of hanging rags on sacred trees is observed in many lands, though the motives for doing so are by no means always clear. See E. S. Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus* (London, 1894–1896), ii. 175 *sqq.*

[3] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, pp. 171 *sq.*

green oak growing near the edge of a precipice. The people hang strips of their garments on its boughs, believing that it has the power to cure sickness. One of its roots forms an arch above ground, and through this arch persons who suffer from rheumatism and lumbago crawl to be healed of their infirmities. Expectant mothers also creep through it to obtain an easy delivery. On the twenty-first of September men and women dance and sing all night beside the tree, the sexes dancing separately. This oak is so sacred that when a sceptic dared to cut a branch of it, his arm withered up.[1]

Daughters of Jacob associated with oaks.

In various parts of the upper valley of the Jordan there are groves of oaks and shrines dedicated to the daughters of Jacob. One of these shrines may be seen at the town of Safed. It is a small mosque containing a tomb in which the damsels are supposed to live in all the bloom of beauty. Incense is offered at the door of the tomb. A gallant and afterwards highly distinguished officer, then engaged in the survey of Palestine, searched the tomb carefully for the ladies, but without success.[2] The association of the daughters of Jacob with oak-trees may perhaps point to a belief in Dryads or nymphs of the oak.

The Hebrew words for oak and terebinth.

The Hebrew words commonly rendered "oak" and "terebinth" are very similar, the difference between them being in part merely a difference in the vowel points which were added to the text by the Massoretic scribes in the Middle Ages. Scholars are not agreed as to the correct equivalents of the words, so that when we meet with one or other of them in the Old Testament it is to some extent doubtful whether the tree referred to is an oak or a terebinth.[3]

[1] F. Sessions, "Some Syrian Folk-lore Notes gathered on Mount Lebanon," *Folk-lore*, ix. (1898) pp. 915 *sq.*; W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, p. 190.

[2] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, pp. 222, 445 *sq.* See also above, p. 37.

[3] "There are five similar Hebrew words—*'ēl* [only in the plural *'ēlīm*], *'ēlāh*, *'ēlōn*, *'allāh* (only Joshua xxiv. 26), and *'allōn*—the difference between which depends in part only upon the punctuation, and the special sense of which is not perfectly certain: Gesenius, after a careful survey of the *data*, arrived at the conclusion, which has been largely accepted by subsequent scholars, that *'ēl*, *'ēlāh*, *'ēlōn* denoted properly the *terebinth*, and *'allāh*, *'allōn* the *oak*. The terebinth (or turpentine tree) in general appearance resembles the oak (though it grows usually alone, not in clumps or forests); and both trees are still common in Palestine" (S. R. Driver, *The Book of*

The terebinth (*Pistacia terebinthus*) is still a common tree in Palestine, occurring either singly or in clumps mingled with forests of oak. The natives call it the *butm* tree. It "is not an evergreen, as is often represented; but its small feathered lancet-shaped leaves fall in the autumn, and are renewed in the spring. The flowers are small and followed by small oval berries, hanging in clusters from two to five inches long, resembling much the clusters of the vine when the grapes are just set. From incisions in the trunk there is said to flow a sort of transparent balsam, constituting a very pure and fine species of turpentine, with an agreeable odour like citron or jessamine, and a mild taste, and hardening gradually into a transparent gum. In Palestine nothing seems to be known of this product of the Butm."[1] The terebinth "is a very common tree in the southern and eastern part of the country, being generally found in situations too warm or dry for the oak, whose place it there supplies, and which it much resembles in general appearance at a distance. It is seldom seen in clumps or groves, never in forests, but stands isolated and weird-like in some bare ravine or on a hillside, where nothing else towers above the low brushwood. When it sheds its leaves at the beginning of winter, it still more recalls the familiar English oak, with its short and gnarled trunk, spreading and irregular limbs, and small twigs. The leaves are pinnate, the leaflets larger than those of the lentisk, and their hue is a very dark reddish-green, not quite so sombre as the locust tree. . . . Towards the north this tree becomes more scarce, but in the ancient Moab and Ammon, and in the region round Heshbon, it is the only one

The terebinth a common tree in Palestine.

Genesis, Tenth Edition, London, 1916, p. 147). Canon Tristram held that *'ēlāh* denoted the terebinth, but that all the other words in question applied to acorn-bearing oaks. According to him, *'allōn* probably stands for the evergreen oak, and *'ēlōn* for the deciduous sorts (*The Natural History of the Bible*,[9] p. 367). In regard to the words in question, Professor G. F. Moore maintains that "there is no real foundation for the discrimination; the words signify in Aramaic 'tree' simply; in Hebrew usually, if not exclusively, 'holy tree,' as the place, and primitively the object of worship, without regard to the species" (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges*, Second Edition, Edinburgh, 1903, pp. 121 *sq.*).

[1] Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine*, Second Edition (London, 1856), ii. 222 *sq.* Compare W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, pp. 19 *sq.*, who also says that the resin is not extracted from the tree by the natives of Palestine.

which relieves the monotony of the rolling downs and boundless sheep-walks; and in the few glens south of the Jabbok we noticed many trees of a larger size than any others which remain west of Jordan."[1] Fine specimens of the tree may be seen standing solitary in various places; for example, one in the Wady es Sunt on the way from Hebron to Ramleh, another at the north-west corner of the walls of Jerusalem, another on the supposed site of the city of Adullam, and another at Shiloh.[2] And beautiful forests of mingled terebinths and oaks clothe some of the glens of the Lebanon, the hills of Naphtali and Galilee, and form a great part of the rich woodlands on the eastern side of the Jordan.[3]

Sacred terebinths in Palestine hung with votive rags.

Yet if we may judge from the comparative frequence of allusions to the two trees in the descriptions of travellers, the terebinth is less common in Palestine than the oak,[4] and is apparently less often the object of superstitious regard. However, instances of such veneration for the tree are not uncommon. Canon Tristram tells us that "many terebinths remain to this day objects of veneration in their neighbourhood; and the favourite burying-place of the Bedouin sheikh is under a solitary tree. Eastern travellers will recall the 'Mother of Rags' on the outskirts of the desert, a terebinth covered with the votive offerings of superstition or affection";[5] and elsewhere the same writer mentions a terebinth hung with rags at the source of the Jordan.[6] Again, Captain Conder writes that "among the peculiar religious institutions

[1] H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*,[4] pp. 400 *sq.*

[2] Edward Robinson, *loc. cit.*; W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Southern Palestine and Jerusalem*, p. 229; *id.*, *Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, pp. 19 *sq.*, 49 *sq.*, 478; H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*,[4] p. 159.

[3] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, pp. 224, 257, 324, 551, 558, 559; *id.*, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, pp. 282, 295, 502, 555, 578, 594, 596, 604 *sq.* See above, pp. 35, 40, 41, 45. On the road from Heshbon to Rabbath Ammon, "we rode up a narrow glen, rocky and rough, with fine terebinth-trees, the largest we saw in Palestine, stretching their gnarled and twisted boughs over the path" (H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*,[4] p. 531).

[4] Compare the number of the references to oaks and terebinths respectively in the indices to W. M. Thomson's *The Land and the Book* (the edition in three volumes). From that work I have adduced only part of the evidence for the prevalence of the oak, but most of the evidence for the prevalence of the terebinth. No modern writer, probably, has known Syria and Palestine so well as Thomson, who spent forty-five years of his life in the country.

[5] H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*,[4] p. 401.

[6] See above, p. 45.

of the country are the sacred trees, which are generally oaks, or terebinths, with names taken from some Sheikh to whom they belong. They are covered all over with rags tied to the branches, which are considered acceptable offerings."[1] In Moab "the sacred trees—oak, evergreen oak, terebinth, locust-tree, olive, the particular kind is unimportant—are found under a double aspect, either attached to a sanctuary or isolated. In the first case they appear not to have an origin independent of the holy place which they shade, nor to have any function distinct from the influence ascribed to the saint (*wely*) who caused them to grow, and who vivifies and protects them. . . . The second sort of sacred trees does not enjoy the benefit of a sanctuary in the neighbourhood; they grow solitary, near a spring, on a hill, or at the top of a mountain. . . . Near Taibeh, not far from Hanzireh, to the south-west of Kerak, I passed near a sacred terebinth, with thick green foliage, covered with rags and much honoured by the Arabs of the district. I asked where was the tomb of the saint (*wely*). 'There is no tomb here,' replied an Arab who was finishing his devotions. 'But then,' I continued, 'why do you come here to pray?' 'Because there is a saint,' he answered promptly. 'Where is he?' 'All the ground shaded by the tree serves as his abode; but he dwells also in the tree, in the branches, and in the leaves.'"[2] Again, among the ruins of a Roman fortress called Rumeileh, in Moab, there grows a verdurous terebinth, of which no Arab would dare to cut a bough, lest he should be immediately struck by the spirit of the saint (*wely*), who resides in the tree and has made it his domain. On being asked whether the saint lived in the tree, some Arabs answered that it was his spirit which lent its vigour to the tree, others thought that he dwelt beneath it, but their ideas on the subject were vague, and they agreed that "God knows." Father Jaussen, to whom we owe these accounts of sacred terebinths in Moab, informs us that "the spirit or *wely* who is worshipped in the tree has his abode circumscribed by the tree; he cannot quit it, he lives there as in prison. His situation thus differs from that of the saint

Sacred terebinths in Moab.

The spirit or saint (*Wely*) in the tree.

[1] C. R. Conder, *Tent Work in Palestine*, New Edition (London, 1885), p. 313.

[2] Antonin Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab* (Paris, 1908), pp. 331 *sq.*

(*wely*), properly so called, and from the ancestor, who are not confined to one spot, but can transport themselves to the places where they are invoked by their worshippers. When from motives of devotion a Bedouin, to obtain a cure, sleeps under one of the sacred trees, the spirit or the saint (*wely*) often appears to him by night and charges him with a commission or incites him to offer a sacrifice. He is always obeyed." [1]

The saint (*Wely*) in the tree probably a survival of an old tree-spirit.

In these latter cases the saint in the tree is probably neither more nor less than an old heathen tree-spirit, who has survived, in a hardly disguised form, through all the ages of Christian and Mohammedan supremacy. This is confirmed by the account which Father Jaussen gives of the superstitious veneration entertained by the Arabs for these trees. "The magnificent group of trees," he says, "called Meïseh, to the south of Kerak, enjoys the same renown and the same worship. Similarly, the tree of ed-De'al does not cover any tomb of a saint (*wely*), nevertheless its reputation is very great and its power considerable. I found it impossible to ascertain whether there is a saint (*wely*); to the thinking of the persons with whom I conversed it is the tree itself that is to be feared. Woe to the Arab who would dare to cut a branch, a bough, or even a leaf! The spirit or the virtue of the tree would punish him at once, perhaps it might cause his death. A Bedouin had deposited a bag of barley, for a few hours only, under its protection. Two goats, straying from a flock in the neighbourhood, found the bag and ate up the barley. The tree sent a wolf after them, which devoured them that evening. It is indeed the tree itself which punishes, as it is the tree itself which bestows its benefits. In the touch of its leaves there is healing. At Meïseh, at ed-De'al the Bedouins never fail to pass a green bough over their faces or arms in order either to rid themselves of a malady or to acquire fresh vigour. The mere touch communicates to them the virtue of the tree. It is under its shade that the sick go and sleep to be healed of their infirmities. It is to its branches that the rags are tied which can be seen in such number and variety. The day that the cloth is tied to the tree the sickness must pass out of the body of the patient, because, as

[1] Antonin Jaussen, *op. cit.* pp. 333 *sq.*

they have assured me, the sickness is thus fastened to the tree. Others, with a dash of rationalism, hold that the rag is nothing but a memorial of a visit paid to the tree. Sometimes an Arab, passing near a tree, ties a piece of cloth or leaves his staff under the tree, in token of respect, or to secure its favour for himself in time to come. It is not, in fact, uncommon to meet with Arabs who knot a scrap of red or green cloth (never black, rarely white) to the boughs of a sacred tree for the purpose of ensuring the health of a favourite child. . . . At Meïseh I found, fastened to a branch, several locks of hair. My companion gave me the following explanation: 'It is a sick woman who has paid a visit to the tree; she has shorn her hair in token of veneration for the tree.'"[1]

The oak more predominantly the sacred tree of Palestine than the terebinth.

In the warm and dry climate of Moab the terebinth is the principal tree, while the oak flourishes more in the cooler and rainier districts of Gilead and Galilee in the north.[2] It is, therefore, natural that the terebinth should be predominantly the sacred tree of the south and the oak of the north; but throughout Palestine as a whole, if we may judge by the accounts of travellers, the oak appears to be the commoner tree, and consequently, perhaps, the more frequently revered by the peasants. Accordingly, when we consider the tenacity and persistence of identical forms of superstition through the ages, we seem justified in concluding that in antiquity also the oak was more generally worshipped by the idolatrous inhabitants of the land. From this it follows that when a doubt exists as to whether in the Old Testament the Hebrew word for a sacred tree should be rendered "oak" or "terebinth," the preference ought to be given to the rendering "oak." This conclusion is confirmed by the general practice of the old Greek translators and of St. Jerome, who, in translating these passages, commonly render the doubtful word by "oak," and not by "terebinth."[3] On the whole, then, the revisers of our English Bible have done well to

[1] Antonin Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab* (Paris, 1908), pp. 332 *sq.*

[2] H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*,[4] pp. 8, 400, 401. See above, p. 47.

[3] So far as I see, there are some eighteen to twenty passages in the Old Testament where a reference is made to an oak or terebinth, which, from the context, may be thought to have been sacred. In thirteen of these passages

translate all the words in question by "oak" instead of by "terebinth," except in the two passages where two of these words occur in the same verse. In these two passages the revisers render *'allōn* by "oak," but *'ēlah* by "terebinth." Elsewhere they render *'ēlāh* by "oak"; but in the margin they mention "terebinth" as an alternative rendering. I shall follow their example and cite the Revised Version in the sequel.

The worship of oaks denounced by the Hebrew prophets.

That the idolatrous Hebrews of antiquity revered the oak tree is proved by the evidence of the prophets who denounced the superstition. Thus Hosea says, "They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and terebinths, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters commit whoredom, and your brides commit adultery. I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your brides when they commit adultery, for they themselves go apart with whores, and they sacrifice with the harlots."[1] The prophet here refers to a custom of religious prostitution which was carried on under the shadow of the sacred trees. Referring to the sacred groves of his heathenish countrymen, Ezekiel says, "And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their

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the Septuagint renders the doubtful word by "oak" (*δρῦς* or *βάλανος*), and in five by "terebinth"; in the other passages the rendering is neutral. In eleven out of the eighteen to twenty passages St. Jerome, in his Latin Version (the Vulgate), renders the doubtful word by "oak" (*quercus*), and in four by "terebinth"; in the other passages the rendering is neutral. The passages in question are Genesis xii. 6, xiii. 18, xiv. 13, xviii. 1, xxxv. 4 and 8; Deuteronomy xi. 30; Joshua xxiv. 26; Judges vi. 11 and 19, ix. 6 and 37; 1 Samuel x. 3; 1 Kings xiii. 14; 1 Chronicles x. 12; Isaiah i. 29, lvii. 5; Jeremiah ii. 34 (where the Hebrew text should be corrected by the Septuagint and the Peshitto; see below, p. 53, note[4]); Ezekiel vi. 13; Hosea iv. 13. In a number of these passages the English Authorized Version is quite incorrect, rendering the doubtful word neither by "oak" nor by "terebinth." The English reader should consult the Revised Version. In two passages (Isaiah vi. 13; Hosea iv. 13) two of the doubtful words (*'ēlāh* and *'allōn*) occur in the same verse. In the former passage the Septuagint renders *'ēlāh* by "terebinth," and *'allōn* by "oak" (*βάλανος*); in the latter passage it renders *'allōn* by "oak" and *'ēlāh* by "shady tree." In both passages the Vulgate renders *'ēlāh* by "terebinth" and *'allōn* by "oak." My ignorance of Syriac prevents me from comparing the renderings of the Peshitto. I have to thank my friend Professor F. C. Burkitt for kindly communicating to me the rendering of the Peshitto in Jeremiah ii. 34.

[1] Hosea iv. 13 *sq.*

altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols."[1] Again, Isaiah, speaking of the sinners who have forsaken the Lord, says, "For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen."[2] Again, the author of the later prophecy which passes under the name of Isaiah, in denouncing the idolatry of his day, says, "Ye that inflame yourselves among the oaks, under every green tree; that slay the children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks."[3] The sacrifice here referred to is, no doubt, the sacrifice of children to Moloch. Jeremiah alludes to the same practice in a passionate address to sinful Israel: "Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the innocent poor: I have not found it at the place of breaking in, but upon every oak."[4] Thus it would seem that the blood of the sacrificed children was smeared on, or at least offered in some form to, the sacred oaks. In this connexion it should be remembered that the victims were slaughtered before being burned in the fire,[5] so that it would be possible to use their blood as an unguent or libation. The Gallas of East Africa pour the blood of animals at the foot of their sacred trees in order to prevent the trees from withering, and sometimes they smear the trunks and boughs with blood, butter, and milk.[6] The Masai of

Bloody sacrifices to sacred oaks.

Bloody sacrifices to sacred trees in Africa.

[1] Ezekiel vi. 13. For "oak" the Revised Version has "terebinth" in the margin.

[2] Isaiah i. 29. For "oaks" the Revised Version has "terebinths" in the margin.

[3] Isaiah lvii. 5.

[4] Jeremiah ii. 34, where the meaningless אֵלֶּה ("these") of the Massoretic text should be corrected into אֵלָּה or אֵלָה ("oak" or "terebinth") in accordance with the readings of the Septuagint (*ἐπὶ πάσῃ δρυΐ*) and of the Syriac Version. The change is merely one of punctuation; the original Hebrew text remains unaffected. The vague sense of the preposition בְּ leaves it uncertain whether the blood was smeared on the trees or poured out at their foot. However, Professor Kennett writes to me that he believes the textual corruption in Jeremiah ii. 34 to be too deep to be healed by the slight emendation I have adopted. He conjectures that the last clause of the verse is defective through the omission of a word or words.

[5] Genesis xxii.; Ezekiel xvi. 20 *sq.*, xxiii. 39; G. F. Moore, in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, iii. 3184 *sq.*, *s.v.* "Molech, Moloch."

[6] Ph. Paulitschke, *Ethnographie Nordost-Afrikas, die geistige Cultur der Danâkil, Galla und Somâl* (Berlin, 1896), pp. 34 *sq.*; *id.*, *Ethnographie Nordost-Afrikas, die materielle Cultur der Danâkil, Galla und Somâl* (Berlin, 1893), p. 152. Compare O. Baumann, *Usambara und seine Nachbargebiete* (Berlin, 1891), p. 142.

East Africa revere a species of parasitic fig which gradually envelops the whole trunk of the original tree in glistening whitish coils of glabrous root and branch. Such trees the Masai propitiate by killing a goat and pouring its blood at the base of the trunk.[1] When the Nounoumas of the French Sudan are sacrificing to Earth for good crops, they pour the blood of fowls on tamarinds and other trees.[2] The Bambaras, of the Upper Niger, sacrifice sheep, goats, and fowls to their baobabs or other sacred trees, and apply the blood of the victims to the trunks, accompanying the sacrifice with prayers to the indwelling spirit of the tree.[3] In like manner the old Prussians sprinkled the blood of their sacrifices on the holy oak at Romove;[4] and Lucan says that in the sacred Druidical grove at Marseilles every tree was washed with human blood.[5]

Worship of the oak or terebinth apparently ancient in Israel; association of Jehovah with the trees.

But if, in the later times of Israel, the worship of the oak or the terebinth was denounced by the prophets as a heathenish rite, there is a good deal of evidence to show that at an earlier period sacred oaks or terebinths played an important part in the popular religion, and that Jehovah himself was closely associated with them. At all events, it is remarkable how often God or his angel is said to have revealed himself to one of the old patriarchs or heroes at an oak or terebinth. Thus the first recorded appearance of Jehovah to Abraham took place at the oracular oak or terebinth of Shechem, and there Abraham built him an altar.[6] Again, we are told that Abraham dwelt beside the oaks or terebinths of Mamre at Hebron, and that he built there also an altar to the Lord.[7] And it was there, beside the oaks or

[1] Sir Harry Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate*, Second Edition (London, 1904), ii. 832. The Masai name for this parasite fig is *retete*.

[2] L. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan* (Paris, 1912), p. 190.

[3] Jos. Henry, *Les Bambara* (Münster i. W., 1910), pp. 109 *sq.*, 117 *sq.*, 120.

[4] Chr. Hartknoch, *Alt und Neues Preussen* (Frankfort and Leipsic, 1684), p. 159.

[5] Lucan, *Pharsalia*, iii. 405.

[6] Genesis xii. 6-9. The "oak of Moreh" (Revised Version, "terebinth," margin) is the "directing oak" or "oak of the director"; where the reference is to oracular direction given either by the tree itself or by the priests who served it. Oracular oaks or terebinths (oaks or terebinths of Moreh) are mentioned also in this neighbourhood by the author of Deuteronomy (xi. 30). See S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, Tenth Edition (London, 1916), pp. 146 *sq.*; *id.*, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, Third Edition (Edinburgh, 1902), p. 134.

[7] Genesis xiii. 18, xiv. 13.

terebinths of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day, that God appeared to him in the likeness of three men, and there under the shadow of the trees the Deity partook of the flesh, the milk, and the curds which the hospitable patriarch offered him.[1] So, too, the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak or terebinth of Ophrah, and Gideon, who was busy threshing the wheat, brought him the flesh and broth of a kid and unleavened cakes to eat under the oak. But the angel, instead of eating the food, bade Gideon lay the flesh and cakes on a rock and pour out the broth; then with a touch of his staff he drew fire from the rock, and the flame consumed the flesh and the cakes. After that the heavenly, or perhaps the arboreal, visitor vanished, and Gideon, like Abraham, built an altar on the spot.[2]

The oracular oak or terebinth at Shechem.

There was an oracular oak or terebinth near Shechem as well as at Mamre;[3] whether it was the same tree under which God appeared to Abraham, we do not know. Its name, "the oak or terebinth of the augurs," seems to show that a set of wizards or Druids, if we may call them so, had their station at the sacred tree in order to interpret to inquirers the rustling of the leaves in the wind, the cooing of the wood-pigeons in the branches, or such other omens as the spirit of the oak vouchsafed to his worshippers. The beautiful vale of Shechem, embosomed in olives, orange-groves, and palms, and watered by plenteous rills, still presents perhaps the richest landscape in all Palestine,[4] and of old it would seem to have been a great seat of tree-worship. At all events in its history we meet again and

Tree-worship in the vale of Shechem.

[1] Genesis xviii. 1-8, with S. R. Driver's note on verse 8.

[2] Judges vi. 11-24.

[3] Judges ix. 37, "the oak of Meonenim" (Revised Version), "the augurs' oak or terebinth" (Revised Version, margin). Compare G. F. Moore, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges*, Second Edition (Edinburgh, 1903), p. 260. We read of a man of God sitting under an oak (1 Kings xiii. 14); but the tree need not have been oracular.

[4] H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*,[4] pp. 135, 147. The modern name of Shechem is Nablus. The town "has the mulberry, the orange, the pomegranate, and other trees growing amongst the houses, and wreathed and festooned with delicious perfume during the months of April and May. There the bulbul delights to sing, and hundreds of other birds unite to swell the chorus. The people of Nablûs maintain that theirs is the most musical valley in Palestine, nor am I disposed to contradict them" (W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, p. 143).

again with the mention of oaks or terebinths which from the context appear to have been sacred. Thus Jacob took the idols or "strange gods" of his household, together with the earrings which had probably served as amulets, and buried them under the oak or terebinth at Shechem.[1] According to Eustathius, the tree was a terebinth and was worshipped by the people of the neighbourhood down to his own time. An altar stood beside it on which sacrifices were offered.[2] Again, it was under the oak by the sanctuary of the Lord at Shechem that Joshua set up a great stone as a witness, saying to the Israelites, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness against you, lest ye deny your God."[3] And it was at "the oak of the pillar" in Shechem that the men of the city made Abimelech king.[4] The oak or terebinth may have been supposed to stand in some close relation to the king; for elsewhere we read of a tree called "the king's oak" on the borders of the tribe of Asher;[5] and according to one account the bones of Saul and of his sons were buried under the oak or terebinth at Jabesh.[6] So when Rebekah's nurse Deborah died, she was buried below Bethel under the oak, and hence the tree was called the Oak of Weeping.[7] The Oak of Weeping may perhaps have been the very oak at which, according to the directions of Samuel the prophet, Saul shortly before his coronation was to meet three men going up to sacrifice to the Lord at Bethel, who would salute him and give him two of their loaves.[8] This salutation of the future king by the three men at the oak reminds us of the meeting of Abraham with God in the likeness of three men under the oaks of Mamre. In the original story the greeting of the three men at the oak may have had a deeper meaning than transpires in the form in which the narrative has come down to us. Taken along with the coronation of

Association of the oak with the king.

Suggestion of an oak-spirit in triple form.

[1] Genesis xxxv. 4, with S. R. Driver's note.

[2] Eustathius, quoted by H. Reland, *Palaestina* (Trajecti Batavorum, 1714), p. 712.

[3] Joshua xxiv. 26 *sq.*

[4] Judges ix. 6 ("terebinth," Revised Version, margin).

[5] Joshua xix. 26, where Allamelech means "the king's oak."

[6] 1 Chronicles x. 12. According to another account (1 Samuel xxxi. 8) the tree under which the royal bones were buried was a tamarisk.

[7] Genesis xxxv. 8.

[8] 1 Samuel x. 3 *sq.*

Abimelech under an oak, it suggests that the spirit of the oak, perhaps in triple form, was expected to bless the king at his inauguration. In the light of this suggestion the burial of Saul's bones under an oak seems to acquire a fresh significance. The king, who at the beginning of his reign had been blessed by the god of the oak, was fittingly laid to his last rest under the sacred tree.

The oak or terebinth of Mamre.

But of all the holy trees of ancient Palestine by far the most famous and the most popular was apparently the oak or terebinth of Mamre, where God revealed himself to Abraham, the founder of the Israelitish nation, in the likeness of three men. Was the tree an oak or a terebinth? The ancient testimonies are conflicting, but the balance of evidence is in favour of the terebinth.[1] Josephus tells us that in his day many monuments of Abraham, finely built of beautiful marble, were shown at Hebron, and that six furlongs from the town grew a very large terebinth, which was said to have stood there since the creation of the world.[2] Though he does not expressly say so, we may assume that this terebinth was the one under which Abraham was believed to have entertained the angels. Again, Eusebius affirms that the terebinth remained down to his own time in the early part of the fourth century A.D., and that the spot was still revered as divine by the people of the neighbourhood. A holy picture represented the three mysterious guests who partook of Abraham's hospitality under the tree; the middle of the three figures excelled the rest in honour, and him the good bishop identified with "Our Lord Himself, our Saviour, whom even they who know Him not adore."[3] All three angels were worshipped by the people of the neighbourhood.[4]

Ancient testimonies to the survival and sanctity of the tree.

The three angels worshipped at the place.

[1] The passages of ancient authors which refer to the tree are collected by H. Reland, *Palaestina ex monumentis veteribus illustrata* (Trajecti Batavorum, 1714), pp. 711-715, and by Valesius in his commentary on Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, iii. 53 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, xx. 1113 *sqq.*).

[2] Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* iv. 9. 7.

[3] Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, v. 9 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, xxii. 384). In his *Onomasticon* Eusebius, speaking of Hebron, mentions both the oak of Abraham and the terebinth: ἡ δρῦς Ἀβραάμ, καὶ τὸ μνῆμα αὐτόθι θεωρεῖται, καὶ θρησκεύεται ἐπιφανῶς πρὸς τῶν ἐχθρῶν [*sic*] ἡ θερέβενθος καὶ οἱ τῷ Ἀβραὰμ ἐπιξενωθέντες ἄγγελοι (Eusebius, *Onomasticon*, *s.v.* Ἀρβώ, pp. 54, 56, ed. F. Larsow and G. Parthey). In this passage we must apparently read πλησιοχώρων, or ἐγχωρίων, or some such word, for ἐχθρῶν.

[4] Eusebius, *Onomasticon*, *s.v.* Ἀρβώ. See the preceding note.

The three gods in the holy oak at Romove.

They curiously remind us of the three gods whose images were worshipped in the holy oak at Romove, the religious centre of the heathen Prussians.[1] Perhaps both at Hebron and at Romove the tree-god was for some reason conceived in triple form. A pilgrim of Bordeaux, author of the oldest *Itinerary of Jerusalem*, writing in the year 333 A.D., tells us that the terebinth was two miles from Hebron, and that a fine basilica had been built there by order of Constantine. Yet from the manner of his reference to it we gather that "the terebinth" was in his time merely the name of a place, the tree itself having disappeared.[2] Certainly Jerome, writing later in the same century, seems to imply that the tree no longer existed. For he says that the oak of Abraham or of Mamre was shown down to the reign of Constantine, and that "the place of the terebinth" was worshipped superstitiously by all the people round about, because Abraham had there entertained the angels.[3]

Church built by Constantine "at the oak of Mamre."

When Constantine determined to build a church at the sacred tree, he communicated his intention in a letter to Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, who has fortunately preserved a copy of the letter in his life of the emperor. I will extract from it the passage which relates to the holy tree: "The place which is called 'at the Oak of Mamre,' where we learn that Abraham had his home, is said to be polluted by certain superstitious persons in various ways; for it is reported that most damnable idols are set up beside it, and that an altar stands hard by, and that unclean sacrifices are constantly offered. Wherefore, seeing that this appears to be foreign to the present age and unworthy of the holiness of the place, I wish your Grace to know that I have written to the right honourable Count Acacius, my friend, commanding that without delay all the idols found at the aforesaid

[1] Chr. Hartknoch, *Alt und Neues Preussen* (Frankfort and Leipsic, 1684), pp. 116 *sq.*

[2] "Itinerarium Burdigalense," in *Itinera Hierosolymitana*, rec. P. Geyer (Vienna, 1898), p. 25, "*Inde Terebintho milia viii. Ubi Abraham habitavit et puteum fodit sub arbore terebintho et cum angelis locutus est et cibum sumpsit, ibi basilica facta est jussu Constantini mirae pulchritudinis. Inde terebintho Cebron milia ii.*"

[3] Jerome, *Liber de situ et nominibus locorum Hebraicorum, s.v.* "Arbe" (Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, xxiii. 862). This treatise of Jerome, which is substantially a translation of the *Onomasticon* of Eusebius, was written about 388 A.D. It is printed in the convenient edition of the latter work by Larsow and Parthey.

place shall be committed to the flames, and the altar overturned; and any one who after this decree may dare to commit impiety in such a place shall be deemed liable to punishment. We have ordered that the spot shall be adorned with the pure building of a basilica, in order that it may be made a meeting-place worthy of holy men."[1]

Doubt whether the tree was an oak or a terebinth.

In this letter it will be observed that the emperor speaks of the sacred tree as an oak, not as a terebinth, and it is called an oak also by the Church historians Socrates[2] and Sozomenus.[3] But little weight can be given to their testimony since all three probably followed the reading of the Septuagint, which calls the tree an oak, not a terebinth.[4] It is probably in deference to the authority of the Septuagint that Eusebius himself speaks of "the oak of Abraham" in the very passage in which he tells us that the terebinth existed to his own time.[5] The Church historian Sozomenus has bequeathed to us a curious and valuable description of the festival, which down to the time of Constantine, or even later, was held every summer at the sacred tree. His account runs thus:—

Annual festival held in antiquity at the terebinth or oak of Mamre.

"I must now relate the decree which the Emperor Constantine passed with regard to what is called the oak of Mamre. This place, which they now call Terebinth, is fifteen furlongs north of Hebron and about two hundred and fifty furlongs from Jerusalem. It is a true tale that with the angels sent against the people of Sodom the Son of God appeared to Abraham and told him of the birth of his son. There every year a famous festival is still held in summer time by the people of the neighbourhood as well as by the inhabitants of the more distant parts of Palestine and by the Phoenicians and Arabians. Very many also assemble for trade, to buy and sell; for every one sets great store on the festival. The Jews do so because they pride themselves on Abraham as their founder; the Greeks do so on account

[1] Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, iii. 51-3 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, xx. 1112 *sqq.*).

[2] Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, i. 18 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, lxvii. 124), who seems to draw his information from Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*.

[3] Sozomenus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ii. 4 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, lxvii. 941, 944). Yet while he speaks of "the oak called Mamre," this historian tells us that the place itself was called Terebinth.

[4] Genesis xiii. 18, xiv. 13, xviii. 1.

[5] See above, p. 57 note[3].

of the visit of the angels; and the Christians do so also because there appeared at that time to the pious man One who in after ages made himself manifest through the Virgin for the salvation of mankind. Each, after the manner of his faith, does honour to the place, some praying to the God of all, some invoking the angels and pouring wine, or offering incense, or an ox, or a goat, or a sheep, or a cock. For every man fattened a valuable animal throughout the year, vowing to keep it for himself and his family to feast upon at the festival on the spot. And all of them here refrain from women, either out of respect to the place or lest some evil should befall them through the wrath of God, though the women beautify and adorn their persons specially, as at a festival, and show themselves freely in public. Yet there is no lewd conduct, though the sexes camp together and sleep promiscuously. For the ground is ploughed and open to the sky, and there are no houses except the ancient house of Abraham at the oak and the well that was made by him. But at the time of the festival no one draws water from the well. For, after the Greek fashion, some set burning lamps there; others poured wine on it, or threw in cakes, money, perfumes, or incense. On that account, probably, the water was rendered unfit to drink by being mixed with the things thrown into it. The performance of these ceremonies according to Greek ritual was reported to the Emperor Constantine by his wife's mother, who had gone to the place in fulfilment of a vow."[1]

Association of the place with the beginning and the end of the Jewish nation.

Thus it appears that at Hebron an old heathen worship of the sacred tree and the sacred well survived in full force down to the establishment of Christianity. The fair which was held along with the summer festival appears to have drawn merchants together from many quarters of the Semitic world. It played a melancholy part in the history of the Jews; for at this fair, after the last siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Hadrian in the year 119 A.D., a vast multitude of captive men, women, and children was sold into slavery.[2] So the Jewish nation came

[1] Sozomenus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ii. 4 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, lxvii. 941, 944).

[2] Jerome, *Commentary on Jeremiah*, xxxi. (Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, xxiv. 877); *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. L. Dindorf, i. 474.

to an end on the very spot where it was traditionally said to have been founded by Abraham, at the sacred oak or terebinth of Mamre. The tree, or rather its successor, is shown to this day in a grassy field a mile and a half to the west of Hebron. It is a fine old evergreen oak (*Quercus pseudo-coccifera*), the noblest tree in southern Palestine. The trunk is twenty-three feet in girth, and the span of its spreading boughs measures ninety feet. Thus in the long rivalry between the oak and the terebinth for the place of honour at Mamre the oak has won. There is not a single large terebinth in the neighbourhood of Hebron.[1]

[1] Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine*, Second Edition (London, 1856), ii. 81 *sq.*; W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Southern Palestine and Jerusalem*, pp. 282-4; H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*,[4] pp. 382-4; *id.*, *The Natural History of the Bible*,[9] p. 369; K. Baedeker, *Palestine and Syria*,[4] p. 115. A view of the tree, as it appeared in 1860, is given by Sir J. D. Hooker, "On Three Oaks of Palestine," *Transactions of the Linnaean Society of London*, xxiii. (1862) Plate 36. According to Tristram (*The Land of Israel*,[4] p. 383) the tree is "no representative or descendant of the famed oak of Mamre, which was a terebinth (*Pistacia terebinthus*), but a mere substitute, and in a different direction from Hebron, west instead of north."

CHAPTER XVI

THE HIGH PLACES OF ISRAEL

The high places, with their oaks or terebinths and sacred emblems (a pillar and a pole), were formerly the recognized seats of religious worship in Israel.

FROM many passages in the Old Testament we learn that in ancient Israel the regular seats of religious worship were situated on natural heights, which were often, perhaps generally, shaded by the thick foliage of venerable trees. For the most part these sanctuaries appear to have been unenclosed and open to the sky, though sometimes perhaps gay canopies of many colours were spread to protect the sacred emblems, a wooden pole and a stone pillar, from the fierce rays of the summer sun or the driving showers of winter rain.[1] Thither for many ages after the Israelites had settled in Palestine the people resorted to offer sacrifice, and there, under the shadow of ancient oaks or terebinths, their devotions were led by pious prophets and kings, not only without offence, but with an inward persuasion of the divine approbation and blessing. But the multiplication of sanctuaries is apt to foster in ignorant worshippers a belief in a corresponding multiplication of the deities who are worshipped at the shrines; and thus the doctrine of the unity of God, dear to the higher minds in Israel, tended to be frittered away into a tacit acknowledgment of many gods or Baalim, each the lord of his own wooded height, each dispensing the boons of sun-

Polytheistic tendencies of worship at the high places.

[1] Compare Ezekiel xvi. 16; Hosea ix. 6; 2 Kings xxiii. 7. In this last passage the "hangings" (literally "houses") may possibly be the tents mentioned by Hosea and woven of the many-coloured stuffs with which, according to Ezekiel, the high places were decked. As to the "high places," with their wooden poles (*asherim*) and stone pillars (*masseboth*), see G. F. Moore, in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, vol. ii. coll. 2064 *sqq.*, *s.v.* "High Place"; B. Stade, *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Tübingen, 1905), pp. 106 *sqq.*, 111 *sqq.*; I. Benzinger, *Hebräische Archäologie*[2] (Tübingen, 1907), pp. 312 *sqq.*

shine and rain, of fruitfulness and fecundity, to a little circle of hamlets, which looked to him, as Italian villages look to their patron saints, to bless and prosper them in their flocks and herds, their fields and vineyards and oliveyards. The facility with which a theoretical monotheism could thus insensibly slide into a practical polytheism excited the apprehension of the prophets, and the anxiety with which they viewed this theological decadence was quickened into a fiery glow of moral indignation by some of the lewd rites of which these fair scenes, though consecrated, as it might seem, by nature herself to purity and peace, to heavenly thoughts and pensive contemplations, were too often the silent and, we may almost add, the ashamed and reluctant witnesses. And these religious and ethical considerations were reinforced by others which we might call political, though to the ancient Hebrew mind, which beheld all things through a golden haze of divinity, they wore the aspect of judgments threatened or executed by the supreme disposer of events against sinners and evil-doers. The rising power of the great Assyrian and Babylonian empires first menaced and then extinguished the liberties of the little Palestinian kingdoms; and the coming catastrophe was long foreseen and predicted by the higher intelligences in Israel, who clothed their forecasts and predictions in the poetical rhapsodies of prophecy. Musing on the dangers which thus threatened their country, they thought that they discovered a principal source of the peril in the religious worship of the high places, which by their polytheistic tendencies infringed the majesty, and by their immoral seductions insulted the purity, of the one true God. The root of the evil they believed to be religious, and the remedy which they proposed for it was religious also. It was to sweep away the worship of the high places, with all their attendant debaucheries, and to concentrate the whole religious ceremonial of the country at Jerusalém, where a more regular and solemn ritual, cleansed from every impurity, was by its daily intercession, its savoury sacrifices and sweet psalmody, to ensure the divine favour and protection for the whole land. The scheme, bred in the souls and hearts of the great prophets, took practical shape in the memorable reformation of King Josiah; but the measure, so fondly planned and so

Lewd rites celebrated on the high places.

Prophetic reformation and abolition of worship at the high places under the fear of foreign invasion.

hopefully executed, proved unavailing to stay the decline and avert the downfall of the kingdom of Judah. From the day when the high places were abolished and the temple on Mount Zion was constituted the one legitimate national sanctuary, hardly a generation passed before Jerusalem opened her gates to the enemy and the flower of her sons was led away captive to Babylon.

From the prophetic denunciations it appears that green trees were a prominent feature of the high places.

Our knowledge of the local sanctuaries on which, according to the religious interpretation of Jewish history, the destiny of the nation was believed in great measure to turn, is partly drawn from the denunciations of them by the prophets, in whose invectives the frequent association of high places with green trees suggests that the presence of trees, especially perhaps of evergreen trees, was a characteristic feature of these sacred eminences. Thus Jeremiah, speaking of the sin of Israel, says that "their children remember their altars and their sacred poles (*asherim*) by the green trees upon the high hills."[1] And again, "Moreover the Lord said unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot."[2] And Ezekiel, speaking in the name of God, writes as follows: "For when I had brought them into the land, which I lifted up mine hand to give unto them, then they saw every high hill, and every thick tree, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering, there also they made their sweet savour, and they poured out there their drink offerings."[3] And in Deuteronomy, which is generally believed to be substantially the "book of the law" on which King Josiah founded his reformation,[4] the doom of the high places and their idolatrous appurtenances is pronounced in these words: "Ye shall surely destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: and ye shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and burn their sacred poles (*asherim*) with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods; and ye

[1] Jeremiah xvii. 2.
[2] Jeremiah iii. 6, compare ii. 20.
[3] Ezekiel xx. 28.
[4] 2 Kings xxii. 8 *sqq.*

shall destroy their name out of that place."[1] At an earlier period, when these verdant hilltops had not yet fallen into disrepute, we hear of King Saul seated on one of them under the shade of a tamarisk tree, grasping his spear as the symbol of royalty and surrounded by a circle of courtiers and councillors.[2]

Heights crowned with clumps of trees are still the seats of religious worship in Palestine. The trees may be the last relics of ancient forests.

We have seen that in Palestine down to the present time many such heights, crowned by clumps of venerable trees, particularly evergreen oaks, still receive the religious homage of the surrounding peasantry, though their old heathen character is thinly disguised by the tradition that a Mohammedan saint sleeps under their solemn shade. It is reasonable to suppose with some modern writers, who have long sojourned in the Holy Land, that many at least of these shady hilltops are the identical spots where the ancient Israelites sacrificed and burned incense, and that in spite of the zeal of reformers and the hammers of iconoclasts the immemorial sanctuaries on these belvederes have continued through all the ages to be the real centre of the popular religion. Perhaps we may go a step farther and conjecture that these wooded eminences, standing out conspicuously from the broad expanse of brown fields and grey-blue oliveyards, are the last surviving representatives of the old primeval forests which once clothed the country-side for miles and miles, till the industry of man had cleared them from the lowlands to make room for tilth, while his superstition suffered their scanty relics to linger on the heights, as the last retreat of the sylvan deities before the axe of the woodman. At least sacred groves appear to have originated in this fashion elsewhere, and their analogy supports the conjecture that a similar cause may have produced a similar effect in Palestine.

Sacred groves, the relics of ancient forests on high places among the Akikuyu of East Africa.

For example, the Akikuyu of British East Africa "are essentially an agricultural people, and have but few cattle,

[1] Deuteronomy xii. 2 *sq.* For other prophetic denunciations of the high places, see Hosea iv. 13; Ezekiel vi. 13, both quoted above, pp. 52 *sq.*

[2] 1 Samuel xxii. 6, where for "in Ramah" (בָּרָמָה) we should read "on the height" (בַּבָּמָה) with the Septuagint (*ἐν Βαμα*), approved by S. R. Driver (*Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel*, Second Edition, Oxford, 1913, p. 180), Dean Kirkpatrick (*The First Book of Samuel*, Cambridge, 1891, p. 187, in *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*), and Professor A. R. S. Kennedy (*Samuel*, p. 151, in *The Century Bible*).

but there are goats in every village, and often sheep too. To make their fields, acres of forest land must have been cut down, the burning of which has made the soil so fertile. At one time probably the forests of Kenya joined those of the Aberdares and the whole of this area was forest land. The only sign of this now extant are various little tree-topped hills dotted all over the country. Such hills are sacred, and the groves on their top must not be cut. It is this that has preserved them from the fate of the rest of the forest."[1] The hill Kahumbu "is one of the hills topped by sacred groves, of which there are so many in Kikuyu-land. As neither the trees nor the undergrowth may be cut, for fear of sickness visiting the land, these hills are generally surmounted by large trees arising out of a dense mass of undergrowth. This undergrowth is at Kahumbu the retreat of a number of hyenas to whom the surrounding bare and cultivated country affords little other cover. At the top of the hill is a flat spot surrounded by a thicket. This is the sacrificial place, and is called *athuri aliakuru*. When there is a famine or want of rain it will be decided that a sacrifice should be resorted to. Everybody remains in their huts, there being no leave to go out, with the exception of fourteen old men (*wazuri*). These, the elected priests of the hill, ascend with a sheep; goats are not acceptable to Ngai (God) on such an occasion. At the top they light a fire, and then kill the sheep by holding its mouth and nose till it dies of suffocation. It is then skinned, the skin being subsequently given to and worn by one of the old men's children. The sheep is then cooked, a branch is plucked and dipped into the fat which is sprinkled on to the leaves of the surrounding trees. The old men then eat some of the meat; should they not do this the sacrifice is not acceptable. The rest of the flesh is burnt in the fire, and Ngai comes to eat it afterwards. Directly this function is completed, even while the old men are descending the hill, thunder rolls up and hail pours down with such force that the old men have to wrap their clothes round their heads and run for their houses. Water then bursts forth from the

[1] Captain C. H. Stigand, *The Land of Zinj, being an Account of British East Africa* (London, 1913), p. 237.

top of the hill and flows down the side."[1] So on the wooded top of Mount Carmel the sacrifice offered by the prophet Elijah is said to have ended the drought which had parched the land of Israel for years; hardly was the rite accomplished when a cloud rose from the sea and darkened all the sky, and the idolatrous king, who had witnessed the discomfiture of the false prophets, had to hurry in his chariot down the hill and across the plain to escape the torrents of rain that descended like a waterspout from the angry heaven.[2]

Sacred groves, the relics of ancient forests, among the Mundas of Bengal.

The Mundas of Chota Nagpur, in Bengal, "make no images of their gods, nor do they worship symbols, but they believe that though invisible to mortal eyes, the gods may, when propitiated by sacrifice, take up for a time their abode in places especially dedicated to them. Thus they have their 'high places' and 'their groves'—the former, some mighty mass of rock to which man has added nothing and from which he takes nothing, the latter, a fragment of the original forest, the trees in which have been for ages carefully protected, left when the clearance was first made, lest the sylvan gods of the places, disquieted at the wholesale felling of the trees that sheltered them, should abandon the locality. Even now if a tree is destroyed in the sacred grove (*Jáhirá* or *Sarna*) the gods evince their displeasure by withholding seasonable rain."[3] Every Munda village "has in its vicinity a grove reputed to be a remnant of the primeval forest left intact for the local gods when the clearing was originally made. Here Desauli, the tutelary deity of the village, and his wife, Jhár-Era or Mabúrú, are supposed to sojourn when attending to the wants of their votaries. There is a Desauli

[1] Captain C. H. Stigand, *op. cit.* p. 242. The writer adds, "I always narrate such customs as they were told me by the natives. They are the more interesting unshorn of miraculous or unlikely events." As to the sacred groves of Kikuyu-land, see also W. Scoresby Routledge and Katherine Routledge, *With a Prehistoric People* (London, 1910), p. 38, "Woodland is, generally speaking, non-existent, the country having been denuded of trees, but there are the following exceptions. In addition to the sacred groves, which are usually found on hilltops, a certain species of giant forest tree is considered sacred and is always preserved. It is known as the *mú-ti mú-gu*, and is a form of ficus. These trees may be destroyed by grass fires, but are never intentionally cut down."

[2] 1 Kings xviii. 19-46.

[3] E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), pp. 185 *sq.*

for every village, and his authority does not extend beyond the boundary of the village to which his grove belongs; if a man of that village cultivates land in another village, he must pay his devotions to the Desauli of both. The grove deities are held responsible for the crops, and are especially honoured at all the great agricultural festivals. They are also appealed to in sickness."[1] To the same effect another writer tells us that "although the greater portion of the primeval forest, in clearings of which the Munda villages were originally established, have since disappeared under the axe or under the *jārā*-fire,[2] many a Munda village still retains a portion or portions of the original forest to serve as Sarnas or sacred groves. In some Mundari villages, only a small clump of ancient trees now represents the original forest and serves as the village-Sarna. These Sarnas are the only temples the Mundas know. Here the village-gods reside, and are periodically worshipped and propitiated with sacrifices."[3]

Analogy of the grove deities of the Mundas to the Baalim of the Canaanites.

We may suppose that these local Desaulis, who reside in sacred groves, the remnants of the primeval forest, and are held responsible for the crops, answer closely to the Baalim of Canaan, who in like manner dwelt among the trees on the hilltops adjoining the villages, and there received the first-fruits of the earth, which the peasants of the neighbourhood brought them in gratitude for bountiful harvests and the refreshing rain of heaven.

Sacred groves, the relics of ancient forests, on high places among the Afghans.

Again, on the borders of Afghanistan and India "the frontier hills are often bare enough of fields or habitations, but one cannot go far without coming across some *zyarat*, or holy shrine, where the faithful worship and make their vows. It is very frequently situated on some mountain top or inaccessible cliff, reminding one of the 'high places' of the Israelites. Round the grave are some stunted trees of tamarisk or ber (*Zizyphus jujuba*). On the branches of these are hung innumerable bits of rag and pieces of coloured cloth, because every votary who makes a petition at the shrine is bound to tie a piece of cloth on as the outward

[1] E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 188.

[2] "By the *jara* system, land is prepared for cultivation by burning down portions of jungles." As to this mode of cultivation, see above, vol. i. pp. 442 *sqq*.

[3] Sarat Chandra Roy, *The Mundas and their Country* (Calcutta, 1912), pp. 386 *sq*.

symbol of his vow."' One famous shrine of this sort is on the Suliman Range. "Despite its inaccessibility, hundreds of pilgrims visit this yearly, and sick people are carried up in their beds, with the hope that the blessing of the saint may cure them. Sick people are often carried on beds, either strapped on camels or on the shoulders of their friends, for considerably more than a hundred miles to one or other of these *zyarats*. . . . Another feature of these shrines is that their sanctity is so universally acknowledged that articles of personal property may be safely left by the owners for long periods of time in perfect confidence of finding them untouched on their return, some months later, exactly as they left them. One distinct advantage of these shrines is that it is a sin to cut wood from any of the trees surrounding them. Thus it comes about that the shrines are the only green spots among the hills which the improvident vandalism of the tribes has denuded of all their trees and shrubs."[1]

Analogy between the mountain shrines of Afghanistan and Palestine.

These Afghan *zyarats*, or mountain shrines, clearly bear a close resemblance to the modern *welys* of Palestine.[2] Both sets of sanctuaries are commonly situated on hilltops and surrounded by trees which may not be felled or lopped; both are supposed to derive their sanctity from the graves of Mohammedan saints; at both it is customary to deposit property in perfect assurance that it will remain inviolate; and at both it is common for pilgrims to leave memorials of their visit in the shape of rags attached to the branches of the trees.

Sacred groves, the relics of ancient forests, on high places among the Cheremiss of Russia.

Once more, among the Cheremiss of Russia "at the present time isolated groves serve as places of sacrifice and prayer: these groves are known under the name of *kjus-oto*. But in former days it was in the depths of the forest that the Cheremiss sacrificed to their gods. Some manifestation of the divine will, for example the sudden welling-up of a spring, generally marked out the places of prayer to be selected by the people. The Cheremiss of Ufa sought out by preference heights in the neighbourhood of brooks; and even after the axe of the woodman had stripped the sur-

[1] T. L. Pennell, *Among the Wild Tribes of the Afghan Frontier*, Second Edition (London, 1909), pp. 34 *sq.*

[2] See above, pp. 39 *sqq.*

rounding country of its trees, these heights continued to be sacred."[1]

The Baalim of Canaan probably the old woodland deities, whose last trees were spared on the heights.

To judge by these analogies the sacred groves of Palestine in antiquity, which gave so much offence to the later prophets, may well have been remnants of a primeval forest, green islets left standing on solitary heights as refuges for the rustic divinities, whom the husbandman had despoiled of their broad acres, and to whom, as the true owners or Baalim of the land, he still believed himself bound to pay tribute for all the produce he drew from the soil. The sacred pole itself (*asherah*), which was a regular adjunct of the local sanctuaries,[2] may have been no more than the trunk of one of the holy trees stripped of its boughs either by the hand of man or by natural decay. To this day we can detect such religious emblems in process of formation among the Kayans of Borneo. These savages believe in the existence of certain dangerous spirits whom they call *Toh*; and when they clear a patch of jungle in which to sow rice, "it is usual to leave a few trees standing on some high point of the ground in order not to offend the *Toh* of the locality by depriving them of all the trees, which they are vaguely supposed to make use of as resting-places. Such trees are sometimes stripped of all their branches save a few at the top; and sometimes a pole is lashed across the stem at a height from the ground and bunches of palm leaves hung upon it; a 'bull-roarer,' which is used by boys as a toy, is sometimes hung upon such a cross-piece to dangle and flicker in the breeze."[3]

Analogy to the sacred pole (*asherah*) among the Kayans of Borneo.

[1] J. N. Smirnov, *Les Populations Finnoises des bassins de la Volga et de la Kama*, Première Partie (Paris, 1898), p. 180.

[2] G. F. Moore, in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, i. 330 *sqq.*, *s.v.* "Asherah"; I. Benzinger, *Hebräische Archäologie*[2] (Tübingen, 1907), pp. 325 *sqq.* In the English Authorized Version the word *asherah* (plural *asherim*) is incorrectly translated "grove," "groves."

[3] Charles Hose and William McDougall, *The Pagan Tribes of Borneo* (London, 1912), ii. 23. Compare Ivor H. N. Evans, "Notes on some Beliefs and Customs of the 'Orang Dusun' of British North Borneo," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xlvii. (1917) p. 154.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SILENT WIDOW

Restrictions laid on mourners for fear of the ghost.

AMONG many, if not all, peoples of the world the occurrence of a death in a family has entailed on the survivors the obligation of observing certain rules, the general effect of which is to limit in various directions the liberty enjoyed by persons in ordinary life; and the nearer the relationship of the survivor to the deceased, the more stringent and burdensome are usually the restrictions laid on his or her freedom. Though the reasons for imposing these trammels are often unknown to the people who submit to them, a large body of evidence points to the conclusion that many, perhaps most, of them originated in a fear of the ghost and a desire to escape his unwelcome attentions by eluding his observation, repelling his advances, or otherwise inducing or compelling him to acquiesce in his fate, so far at least as to abstain from molesting his kinsfolk and friends.[1] The ancient Hebrews observed many restrictions on the occurrence of a death, which are either expressly enjoined or incidentally referred to in the Old Testament.[2] To the list of rules for the conduct of mourners, which can thus be collected from Scripture, may perhaps be added one which,

[1] Elsewhere I have given examples of such restrictions and attempted to explain them on the principle mentioned in the text. See "On certain Burial Customs as illustrative of the primitive Theory of the Soul," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xv. (1886) pp. 64 *sqq.* Compare *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, pp. 165 *sqq.*; *Psyche's Task*, Second Edition, pp. 111 *sqq.*, especially pp. 142 *sqq.*

[2] See particularly Numbers xix., with the commentary of G. B. Gray (Edinburgh, 1903), pp. 241 *sqq.* On the subject generally, see Fr. Schwally, *Das Leben nach dem Tode* (Giessen, 1892), pp. 9 *sqq.*; C. Gruneisen, *Der Ahnenkultus und die Urreligion Israels* (Halle a. S., 1900), pp. 61 *sqq.*; A. Lods, *La Croyance à la Vie Future et le Culte des Morts dans l'Antiquité Israélite* (Paris, 1906), i. 77 *sqq.*, 88 *sqq.*, 175 *sqq.*

though it is neither inculcated nor alluded to by the sacred writers, is suggested by etymology and confirmed by the analogous usages of other peoples.

Silence perhaps imposed on Hebrew widows as on widows in many lands.

The Hebrew word for a widow is perhaps etymologically connected with an adjective meaning "dumb."[1] If this etymology is correct, it would seem that the Hebrew name for a widow is "a silent woman." Why should a widow be called a silent woman? I conjecture, with all due diffidence, that the epithet may be explained by a widespread custom which imposes the duty of absolute silence on a widow for some time, often a long time, after the death of her husband.

Silence imposed on widows in Africa and Madagascar.

Thus among the Kutus, a tribe on the Congo, widows observe mourning for three lunar months. They shave their heads, strip themselves almost naked, daub their bodies all over with white clay, and pass the whole of the three months in the house without speaking.[2] Among the Sihanaka in Madagascar the observances are similar, but the period of silence is still longer, lasting for at least eight months, and sometimes for a year. During the whole of that time the widow is stripped of all her ornaments and covered up with a coarse mat, and she is given only a broken spoon and a broken dish to eat out of. She may not wash her face or her hands, but only the tips of her fingers. In this state she remains all day long in the house and may not speak to any one who enters it.[3] Among the Nandi, of British East Africa, as long as a widow is in mourning she is considered unclean and may not speak above a whisper, though she is not absolutely forbidden to speak at all.[4] In describing the Nishinam tribe of Californian Indians, a writer who knew these Indians well, as they were in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, mentions that

Silence imposed on widows in some tribes of North American Indians.

[1] *Alemanah* (אַלְמָנָה), "a widow," perhaps connected with *illem* (אִלֵּם), "dumb." The etymology appears to be favoured by the authors of the Oxford Hebrew dictionary, since they class both words together as derived from the same root. See *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, by Fr. Brown, S. R. Driver, and Ch. A. Briggs (Oxford, 1906), p. 48.

[2] *Notes Analytiques sur les Collections Ethnographiques du Musée du Congo*, tome i., fascicule 2, *Religion* (Brussels, 1906), p. 185.

[3] Rabesihanaka (a native Malagese), "The Sihanaka and their Country," *The Antananarivo Annual and Madagascar Magazine, Reprint of the First Four Numbers* (Antananarivo, 1885), p. 326.

[4] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), p. 72.

"around Auburn, a devoted widow never speaks, on any occasion or upon any pretext, for several months, sometimes a year or more, after the death of her husband. Of this singular fact I had ocular demonstration. Elsewhere, as on the American River, she speaks only in a whisper for several months. As you go down towards the Cosumnes this custom disappears."[1] Among the Kwakiutl Indians of British Columbia, for four days after the death of her husband a widow must sit motionless, with her knees drawn up to her chin. For sixteen days after that she is bound to remain on the same spot, but she enjoys the privilege of stretching her legs, though not of moving her hands. During all that time nobody may speak to her. It is thought that if any one dared to break the rule of silence and speak to the widow, he would be punished by the death of one of his relatives. A widower has to observe precisely the same restrictions on the death of his wife.[2] Similarly among the Bella Coola Indians of the same region a widow must fast for four days, and during that time she may not speak a word; otherwise they think that her husband's ghost would come and lay a hand on her mouth, and she would die. The same rule of silence has to be observed by a widower on the death of his wife, and for a similar reason.[3] Here it is to be noted that the reason assigned for keeping silence is a fear of attracting the dangerous and indeed fatal attention of the ghost.

Silence imposed on widows in some tribes of Northern Australia.

But by no people is this curious custom of silence more strictly observed than by some of the savage tribes of Central and Northern Australia. Thus, among the Waduman and Mudburra, two tribes on the Victoria River in the Northern Territory, not only a man's widows but also the wives of his brothers are under a ban of silence for three or four weeks after his death. In the interval the body is placed on a platform of boughs built in a tree, and there it remains

[1] Stephen Powers, *Tribes of California* (Washington, 1877), p. 327.

[2] Franz Boas, in "Fifth Report of the Committee on the North-Western Tribes of Canada," *Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Newcastle-upon-Tyne Meeting, 1889*, p. 43 (separate reprint).

[3] Franz Boas, in "Seventh Report of the Committee on the North-Western Tribes of Canada," *Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Cardiff Meeting, 1891*, p. 13 (separate reprint).

till all the flesh has disappeared from the bones. Then the bones are wrapt in bark and carried to a special camp, where the members of the tribe sit round them and weep. When this ceremony of mourning has been performed, the bones are taken back to the tree and left there finally. During the whole time which elapses from the death to the final deposition of the bones in the tree, no one may eat the animal or plant which was the totem of the deceased. But when the bones have been laid in their last resting-place among the boughs, one or two old men go out into the bush and secure some of the animals or plants which were the dead man's totem. If, for example, the deceased had the flying fox for his totem, then the old men will catch some flying foxes and bring them into the camp. There a fire is kindled and the flying foxes are laid on it to cook. While they are cooking, the women who have been under a ban of silence, that is to say, the widows of the dead man and his brothers' wives, go up to the fire and, after calling out "*Yakai! Yakai!*" put their heads in the smoke. An old man then hits them lightly on the head and afterwards holds out his hand for them to bite a finger. This ceremony removes the ban of silence under which the women had hitherto laboured; they are now free to use their tongues as usual. Afterwards the cooked flying foxes are eaten by some of the male relatives of the deceased; and when that has been done, all the people are free to partake of the flesh.[1]

Silence imposed on widows among the Arunta of Central Australia.

Again, in the Arunta tribe of Central Australia a man's widows smear their hair, faces, and breasts with white pipeclay and remain silent for a certain time, until a ceremony has been performed which restores to them the use of their tongues. The ceremony is as follows. When a widow wishes the ban of silence to be removed, she gathers a large wooden vessel full of some edible seed or small tuber, and smears herself with white pipeclay at the women's camp, where she has been living ever since her husband's death. Carrying the vessel, and accompanied by the women whom she has collected for the purpose, she walks to the centre of the general camp,

[1] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia* (London, 1914), pp. 249 *sq.*

midway between the two sections occupied by the two halves of the tribe. There they all sit down and cry loudly, whereupon the men, who stand to them either in the actual or in the classificatory relationship[1] of sons and younger brothers of the dead man, come up and join the party. Next, these men take the vessel of seeds or tubers from the hands of the widow, and as many as possible laying hold of it, they shout loudly, "*Wah! wah! wah!*" All the women, except the widow, stop crying and join in the shout. After a short time the men hold the vessel of seeds or tubers close to, but not touching, the widow's face, and make passes to right and left of her cheeks, while all again shout "*Wah! wah! wah!*" The widow now stops her crying and utters the same shout, only in subdued tones. After a few minutes the vessel of seeds or tubers is passed to the rear of the men, who now, squatting on the ground and holding their shields in both hands, strike them heavily on the ground in front of the women, who are standing. When that has been done the men disperse to their camps and eat the food brought in the vessel by the widow, who is now free to speak to them, though she still continues to smear herself with pipeclay.[2]

Significance of the rite by which a widow is released from the rule of silence among the Arunta.

The significance of this curious rite, by which an Arunta widow recovers her freedom of speech, is explained as follows by Messrs. Spencer and Gillen: "The meaning of this ceremony, as symbolised by the gathering of the tubers or grass seed, is that the widow is about to resume the ordinary occupations of a woman's life, which have been to a large extent suspended while she remained in camp in what we may call deep mourning. It is in fact closely akin in feeling to the transition from deep to narrow black-edged paper amongst certain more highly civilised peoples. The offering to the sons and younger brothers is intended both to show them that she has properly carried out the first period of mourning, and to gain their goodwill, as they, especially the younger brothers, are supposed to be for some time displeased with a woman when her husband is dead and she is alive. In fact a younger brother meeting the wife of a dead elder

[1] As to classificatory relationships, see above, vol. ii. pp. 227 *sqq.*

[2] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1899), pp. 500-502.

brother, out in the bush performing the ordinary duties of a woman, such as hunting for 'yams,' within a short time of her husband's death, would be quite justified in spearing her. The only reason that the natives give for this hostile feeling is that it grieves them too much when they see the widow, because it reminds them of the dead man. This, however, can scarcely be the whole reason, as the same rule does not apply to the elder brothers, and very probably the real explanation of the feeling is associated, in some way, with the custom according to which the widow will, when the final stage of mourning is over, become the wife of one of these younger brothers whom at first she has carefully to avoid." [1]

Silence imposed on widows among the Unmatjera and Kaitish of Central Australia.

Again, among the Unmatjera and Kaitish, two other tribes of Central Australia, a widow's hair is burnt off close to her head with a firestick, and she covers her body with ashes from the camp fire. This covering of ashes she renews from time to time during the whole period of mourning. If she did not do so, it is believed that the spirit of her dead husband, who constantly follows her about, would kill her and strip all the flesh from her bones. Moreover, her late husband's younger brother would be justified in severely thrashing or even killing her, if at any time he were to meet her during the period of deep mourning without this emblem of sorrow. Further, she must also observe the ban of silence until, usually many months after her husband's death, she is released from it by her husband's younger brother. When this takes place she makes an offering to him of a very considerable quantity of food, and with a fragment of it he touches her mouth, thus indicating to her that she is once more free to talk and to take part in the ordinary duties of a woman.[2]

Silence imposed on widows and many other female relations of the deceased among the Warramunga of Central Australia.

But among the Warramunga, another tribe of Central Australia, the command of silence imposed on women after a death is much more comprehensive and extraordinary. With them it is not only the dead man's widow who must be silent during the whole time of mourning, which may last for one or even two years; his mother, his sisters, his

[1] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 502.

[2] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1904), pp. 507 *sq.*

daughters, his mother-in-law or mothers-in-law, must all equally be dumb and for the same protracted period. More than that, not only his real wife, real mother, real sisters, and real mothers-in-law are subjected to this rule of silence, but a great many more women whom the natives, on the classificatory principle, reckon in these relationships, though we should not do so, are similarly bound over to hold their tongues, it may be for a year, or it may be for two years. As a consequence it is no uncommon thing in a Warramunga camp to find the majority of women prohibited from speaking. Even when the period of mourning is over, some women prefer to remain silent and to use only the gesture language, in the practice of which they become remarkably proficient. Not seldom, when a party of women are in camp, there will be almost perfect silence, and yet a brisk conversation is all the while being conducted among them on their fingers, or rather with their hands and arms, for many of the signs are made by putting the hands or elbows in varying positions. At Tennant's Creek some years ago there was an old woman who had not opened her mouth, except to eat or drink, for more than twenty-five years, and who has probably since then gone down to her grave without uttering another syllable. When, however, after a longer or a shorter interval of absolute silence, a Warramunga widow desires to recover her liberty to speak, she applies to the men who stand to her in the classificatory or tribal relationship of sons, to whom, as is customary in such cases, she has to make a present of food. The ceremony itself is a very simple one; the woman brings the food, usually a large cake of grass seed, and in turn bites the finger of each of the men who are releasing her from the ban of silence. After that she is free to talk as much as she likes. It only remains to add that in the Warramunga tribe a widow crops her hair short, cuts open the middle line of her scalp, and runs a burning firestick along the gaping wound. The consequences of this horrible mutilation are sometimes serious.[1]

Silence imposed on widows among the Dieri.

Again, in the Dieri tribe of Central Australia a widow was not allowed to speak until the whole of the white clay,

[1] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 525 *sq.*; *iid.*, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 500 *sq.*

which she had smeared on her body in token of mourning, had crumbled and fallen away of itself. During this intermediate period, which might last for months, she might communicate with others only by means of the gesture language.[1]

The motive for the silence of a widow is probably a fear of attracting the attention of her husband's ghost.

But why should a widow be bound over to silence for a longer or a shorter time after the death of her spouse? The motive for observing the custom is probably a dread of attracting the dangerous attentions of her late husband's ghost. This fear is indeed plainly alleged as the reason by the Bella Coola Indians, and it is assigned by the Unmatjera and Kaitish as the motive for covering the widow's body with ashes. The whole intention of these customs is apparently either to elude or to disgust and repel the ghost. The widow eludes him by remaining silent; she disgusts and repels him by discarding her finery, shaving or burning her hair, and daubing herself with clay or ashes. This interpretation is confirmed by certain particularities of the Australian usages.

Confirmation of this view from the practice of some Australian tribes.

In the first place, among the Waduman and Mudburra the custom of silence is observed by the widow only so long as the flesh adheres to her late husband's bones; as soon as it has quite decayed and the bones are bare, she is made free of the use of her tongue once more. But it appears to be a common notion that the ghost lingers about his mouldering remains while any of the flesh is left, and that only after the flesh has wholly vanished does he take his departure for the more or less distant spirit-land.[2] Where such a belief prevails it is perfectly natural that the widow should hold her tongue so long as the decomposition of her husband's body is still incomplete, for so long may his spirit be supposed to haunt the neighbourhood and to be liable at any moment to be attracted by the sound of her familiar voice.[3]

[1] A. W. Howitt, *Native Tribes of South-East Australia* (London, 1904), pp. 724 *sq.* Compare Samuel Gason, "Of the tribes, Dieyerie, Auminie, Yandrawontha, Yarawuarka, Pilladapa," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxiv. (1895) p. 171.

[2] I have collected some evidence in *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, p. 372, with note [5]. But the matter requires further investigation.

[3] The same fear of attracting the attention of the ghost by speaking aloud might naturally be felt, though probably in a lesser degree, by other relatives and friends in the time immediately following a death. Hence we can understand why among some Australian tribes on the Lower Murray River all mourners were forbidden to

In the second place, the relation in which among the Arunta, the Unmatjera, and the Kaitish the widow stands to her late husband's younger brother favours the supposition that the motive of the restrictions laid on her is the fear of the ghost. In these tribes the younger brother of her late husband appears to exercise a special superintendence over the widow during the period of mourning; he sees to it that she strictly observes the rules enjoined by custom at such times, and he has the right severely to punish or even to kill her for breaches of them. Further, among the Unmatjera and Kaitish it is the younger brother of the deceased who finally releases the widow from the ban of silence, and thereby restores her to the freedom of ordinary life. Now this special relationship in which the widow stands to her late husband's younger brother is quite intelligible on the supposition that at the end of mourning she is to become his wife, as regularly happens under the common form of the levirate which assigns a man's widow to one of his younger brothers.[1] This custom actually obtains in all the three tribes—the Arunta, the Unmatjera, and the Kaitish—in which the widow observes the rule of silence and stands in this special relation to the younger brothers of her late husband. In the Arunta it is the custom that on the conclusion of mourning the widow becomes the wife of one of her deceased husband's younger brothers;[2] and with regard to the Unmatjera and Kaitish we are told that "this passing on of the widow to a younger, but never to an elder, brother is a very characteristic feature of these tribes."[3] Similarly in the Dieri tribe, which enforced the rule of silence on widows during the period of mourning, a man's widow passed at his death to his brother, who became her husband, and her children called him father.[4] But among rude races, who believe that

Further confirmation of this view from the position in which the widow stands towards her late husband's younger brother in some Australian tribes.

speak for ten days, while the corpse was being reduced to a mummy over a slow fire. See G. F. Angas, *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand* (London, 1847), i. 95.

[1] See above, pp. 276, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298 *sq.*, 303.

[2] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 502.

[3] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 510.

[4] Samuel Gason, "Of the tribes, Dieyerie, Auminie, Yandrawontha, Yarawuarka, Pilladapa," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxiv. (1895) p. 170, "The elder brother claims her [the widow] as she is the wife of his brother"; A. W. Howitt, "The Dieri and other kindred tribes

a man's ghost haunts his widow and pesters her with his unwelcome attentions, marriage with a widow is naturally thought to involve the bridegroom in certain risks arising from the jealousy of his deceased rival, who is loth to resign his spouse to the arms of another. Examples of such imaginary dangers attendant on marriage with a widow have been cited in an earlier part of this book.[1] They may help us to understand why, among the Australian tribes in question, a man keeps such a vigilant watch over the conduct of his deceased elder brother's widow. The motive is probably not so much a disinterested respect for the honour of his dead brother as a selfish regard for his own personal safety, which would be put in jeopardy if he were to marry the widow before she had completely got rid of her late husband's ghost by strictly observing all the precautions usually taken for that purpose, including the rule of silence.

Similar customs and beliefs may have prevailed among the ancient Hebrews.

Thus the analogy of customs observed among widely separated peoples supports the conjecture that among the ancient Hebrews also, at some early time of their history, a widow may have been expected to keep silence for a certain time after the death of her husband for the sake of giving the slip to his ghost; and further, perhaps, that the observance of this precaution may have been particularly enforced by her late husband's younger brother, who, in accordance with the custom of the levirate, proposed to marry her when the days of her mourning were over. But it should be observed that, apart from analogy, the direct evidence for

of Central Australia," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xx. (1891) p. 62, "Besides these marital relations which exist between the groups of Dilpa malis there are such also between men and their brothers' wives and women and their sisters' husbands, but in these cases it is *sub rosa*, and not an open and recognized connection as is that of the Dilpa mali. A man is the Nubia [husband] of his wife, and the Nubia-Kodimoli of his brother's wife. When the brother dies the former ceases to be the Kodimoli of the widow, and becomes her Nubia [husband], and her children call him father." From Gason's statement it might be inferred that on a man's death his *elder* brother succeeded to the widow. 'But as this would be contrary to the general rule of the levirate we may suppose that by "the elder brother" Gason means the eldest of the surviving brothers, who might, and in ordinary circumstances probably would be, younger than the deceased. Dr. Howitt's statement, which I have just quoted, furnishes a clear example of that type of communal marriage between a group of brothers and a group of sisters which I have postulated as the original from which both the levirate and the sororate have been derived by a process of fission. See above, vol. ii. pp. 304 *sqq.*

[1] Vol. i. pp. 523 *sqq.*

such an enforced silence of widows among the Hebrews is no more than a doubtful etymology; and as all inferences from etymology to custom are exceedingly precarious, I cannot claim any high degree of probability for the present conjecture.

CHAPTER XVIII

JONAH AND THE WHALE

How the prophet Jonah was swallowed by a whale and vomited up again.

WE have all been familiar from childhood with the story of the prophet Jonah, who, fleeing from the presence of the Lord, took passage in a ship for Tarshish, where he evidently expected to be beyond the reach of the deity. However, he miscalculated the power of the Lord ; for while he was still at sea, the Lord sent a great wind in pursuit of him, and the storm was such that the ship, in which the runagate prophet had taken his passage, was like to be broken in pieces. But, amid all the tumult of the tempest, Jonah slept soundly in his bunk down below, till the skipper came and, waking him from his slumber, bade him betake himself to his knees as the only way to save the ship. However, when he came on deck, the prophet found that the question with the crew was not so much one of prayer as of pitching somebody overboard as a sort of propitiatory offering to the raging waters, or to the god who had lashed them into fury. So they drew lots to see who should perish to save the rest, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Accordingly with his consent, indeed at his own urgent request, and not until they had very humanely exhausted every effort by hard rowing to make the land, they took up the now conscience-stricken prophet and heaved him over the gunwale into the foaming billows. No sooner did he fall with a splash into the water than the sea went down, and a great calm succeeded to the great storm. But the Lord had mercy on the repentant prophet, and prepared a great fish which swallowed up Jonah ; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. And Jonah prayed to the Lord out of the fish's

belly, and the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited up Jonah, safe and sound, on the dry land.[1]

A New Guinea parallel to the story.

With this picturesque narrative we may compare a less artistic, but equally veracious, story told by the natives of Windesi, on the northern coast of Dutch New Guinea. They say that the inhabitants of the island of Jop formerly dwelt at Batewaar. One day five of them rowed in a canoe across to Waropen to fetch sago. But out on the high sea a whale swallowed them, canoe and all, and they sank with the fish to the bottom. As they sat in the fish's belly, they cut slices of its liver and guts, hacked the canoe in pieces, and, lighting a fire, roasted the liver and guts and ate them. But the fish, thus mangled in its vitals, died, and its carcass drifted to shore. Thereupon, the men, sitting in the fish's belly, heard the cry of a hornbill. They said, "Is that land?" They opened the fish's snout, they saw that it was land, and they went forth. Then the bird came to them and said, "I did it; it is my doing that you people are still alive. Go now home; fetch your people and dwell on this island." So to sea they went, fetched their people, and took up their abode on the island. That is why the inhabitants of the island of Jop do not eat any hornbills.[2]

[1] Jonah i., ii.

[2] J. A. van Balen, "Windesische Verhalen," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië*, lxx. (1915) p. 465. The hornbill gets its Dutch name of *jaarvogel* ("year bird") from the extraordinary bony excrescence or protuberance on the upper side of its bill, which is said to grow by a half-ring every year, these half-rings being distinguishable from each other by grooves, so that the age of the bird can be determined by their number. See François Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien*, iii. (Dordrecht and Amsterdam, 1726) pp. 301 *sq.*; and on hornbills in general, Alfred Newton, *A Dictionary of Birds* (London, 1893–1896), pp. 432 *sqq.* I am indebted to Mr. A. H. Evans, of Clare College, Cambridge, and to Mr. J. H. Hessels for identifying the *jaarvogel* for me and referring me to Valentijn's description of it.

CHAPTER XIX

JEHOVAH AND THE LIONS

Assyrian colonists in Israel, attacked by lions, appeal to a native Israelitish priest to intercede for them with the god of the land.

WHEN after a long siege the Assyrians had taken Samaria and carried away the Israelites into captivity, the king of Assyria sent colonists from Babylonia and Syria to people the desolate cities of Israel. But in their new home the settlers continued to worship their old gods instead of paying their devotions to Jehovah, the god of the land. To punish them for this disrespect, Jehovah sent lions, which mauled and killed some of the idolaters. However singular the choice of such missionaries to the heathen may seem to us, it answered the purpose perfectly. The colonists at once recognized in the ferocious animals the ministers of vengeance despatched by the deity to chastise them for their infringement of his lawful rights; and not knowing how to appease his anger, they sent word to the king of Assyria, saying, "The nations which thou hast carried away, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land." Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, "Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land." So one of the Israelitish priests, whom the Assyrians had carried away from Samaria, came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should worship Jehovah.[1] After that we hear no

[1] 2 Kings xvii. 24-28. In verse 27 I read "let him go and dwell" instead of "let them go and dwell" (וְיֵלֵךְ וְיֵשֶׁב instead of וְיֵלְכוּ וְיֵשְׁבוּ), with some ancient versions, approved by C. F. Burney (*Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings*, Oxford, 1903, p. 336), R. Kittel (*Biblia Hebraica*, i. 535), and Principal J. Skinner (*Kings*, p. 380, *The Century Bible*).

more of the lions. The historian leaves us to infer that their visitation ended with the institution of services in honour of Jehovah, though he or a later editor informs us that side by side with their worship of the god of Israel the colonists continued to worship the national gods whom they had brought with them from their native lands.[1]

So among the Toradjas of Celebes strangers invoke the help of native priests of the land.

The incident illustrates the ancient Semitic belief that every land has its own local deity, who can only be propitiated by the natives of the country, since they alone are acquainted with the particular form of religious ritual which he expects and requires his worshippers to observe.[2] Similar ideas have been entertained by other peoples in regard to the gods of a land. For example, the Toradjas of Central Celebes believe that "every district has its own earth-spirit, or rather earth-spirits, which can only be invoked by members of the tribe which inhabits the district." Hence, when a man has obtained leave to lay out a rice-field in the territory of another tribe, and the time comes for him to make an offering to the earth-spirit Toompoo ntana, "Owner of the Ground," "the stranger always invites for that purpose the help of one of the garden-priests of the tribe in whose land he has come to dwell, because they say that such a stranger does not know how he ought to invoke the spirit of that land; he is not yet accustomed to that earth-spirit."[3]

So among the tribes of the Upper Niger the duties of the priest of Earth are performed, not by the invaders and conquerors, but by descendants of the old aboriginal and conquered race.

Again, among the aboriginal tribes of the Upper Niger valley, the Earth is a very important deity, whose worship is cared for by a priest called the Chief of the Earth. Each village, as a rule, has its Chief of the Earth, who is the religious, but not the political, head of the community, being charged with the duty of offering sacrifices to Earth and the other local deities, and of acting generally as the indispensable intermediary between the gods and the people. For example, it is his business to sacrifice for good crops at sowing, to offer thank-offerings after harvest, to perform the

[1] 2 Kings xvii. 29-33. These verses have perhaps been added by a Deuteronomic editor. So E. Kautsch thinks (*Die heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments*, Freiburg i. B. and Leipsic, 1894, i. 413), and more doubtfully, Principal J. Skinner (*Kings*, pp. 380 *sq.*).

[2] Compare W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, New Edition (London, 1894), pp. 92 *sqq.*

[3] N. Adriani en Alb. C. Kruijt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes* (Batavia, 1912–1914), ii. 233, 245 *sq.*

rites necessary for procuring rain in seasons of drought, and to make atonement whenever Earth has been offended by the spilling of human blood on the ground, whether in murder or in simple assault and battery.[1] Moreover, as representative of the Earth-deity, and therefore himself master of the earth, it is the prerogative of the priest to grant permission to dig graves and to prescribe their dimensions.[2] Now this important priesthood of Earth, invested with purely religious functions and divested of all political power, continues to be filled by members of the old aboriginal race under the rule of an alien people, the Mossi, who have invaded and conquered a large part of the country. "The existence of these Chiefs of the Earth among the Mossi is explained very probably by the superposition of the conquering on the conquered race. When the Mossi invaded and conquered the country, in proportion as they spread their dominion they put men of their own race at the head of all the villages and cantons to ensure the submission of the vanquished population. But they never thought—and this is a notion to be found in the whole of West Africa—that they were qualified to offer sacrifices to the Earth-god of the place and the local divinities. It was only the vanquished, the ancient owners of the soil, with which they continued in good relations, who were qualified for that. Hence the old political head of the aborigines was bound to become naturally a religious chief under the rule of the Mossi. Thus we have seen that the king (*Moro-Naba*) never himself offers the sacrifices to Earth at Wagadugu, nor does he allow such sacrifices to be offered by his minister of religion, the Gandé-Naba. He lays the duty on the king of Wagadugu (*Wagadugu-Naba*), the grandson of the aborigines, who as such is viewed favourably by the local divinities. Similarly, when he sacrifices to the little rising-grounds in the neighbourhood of Wagadugu, he commits the charge of the offerings and sacrifices to the local chief. But what the king (*Moro-Naba*)

[1] L. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan, pays Mossi et Gourounsi* (Paris, 1912), pp. 60, 64, 71 *sq.*, 73, 75, 104, 105, 154, 176, 177, 178, 180, 191 *sq.*, 193, 197, 203, 227, 228, 229, 230, 237, 240, 241, 242, 263, 270, 273, 289, 290, 291, 293, 309 *sq.*, 313, 314 *sq.*, 318, 323, 324, 325, 327, 349, 351 *sq.*, 357, 358, 371, 373, 375, 376, 388.

[2] L. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, pp. 267, 268 *sq.*, 310, 320.

actually does now at Wagadugu, the Mossi kings (*naba*) doubtless did formerly, more or less everywhere after the conquest, as soon as the submission of the aborigines was assured. Hence the institution of the Chiefs of the Earth (*Tensoba*)." [1]

Ceremonies performed by aboriginal priests in India for the repression of man-eating tigers. The Baigas and their country.

The ancient historian has not described the rites and ceremonies by which the Israelitish priest at Bethel succeeded in staying the ravages of the man-eating lions; we can, therefore, only compare the intention, but not the form, of the rites and ceremonies which a priest of one of the aboriginal tribes in India at the present day performs for the purpose of staying the ravages of man-eating tigers and laying the ghosts of such persons as have fallen victims to the ravening maw of these dangerous brutes. The Baigas or Bygas are one of the wildest of the primitive Dravidian tribes that roam the dense *sal* forests which clothe the hills of Mandla in the Central Provinces of India. They are very black, with an upright, slim, but exceedingly wiry frame and features somewhat less coarse than those of the other hill tribes. Almost destitute of clothing, with long, tangled coal-black hair, and armed with bow and arrow and a keen little axe hitched over his shoulder, the Baiga is the very model of an aboriginal mountaineer. He scorns all tillage except in the patches which he clears for temporary cultivation on the mountain-side, pitching his neat abode of bamboo wicker-work, like an eagle's eyrie, on some hilltop or ledge of rock, far above the valleys and the pathways that penetrate them; and he ekes out the fruits of the earth by the unwearied pursuit of game. Full of courage, and accustomed to depend on each other, they do not hesitate to attack every animal of the forest, including the tiger himself, and in their contests with these foes they are aided by the deadly poison, an extract of the root of *Aconitum ferox*, with which they tip their arrows. They lead a very secluded life in the wilderness, and down to the middle of the nineteenth century, when they first came under the exact observation of English officers, they were even more solitary and retired than they

[1] L. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, pp. 594 *sq.* As to the Mossi kings (*Moro-Naba*), see *id.*, pp. 461 *sq.*, 567 *sq.* The title *Tensoba*, meaning "master or chief of the earth," is opposed to *naba*, which means a military chief or king. See L. Tauxier, *op. cit.* p. 595; compare p. 587.

are now. Their villages, it is said, were only to be found in places far removed from all cleared and cultivated country. No roads or well-defined paths connected them with ordinary lines of traffic and more thickly inhabited tracts; but perched away in snug corners of the hills, and hidden by projecting spurs and thick woods from the country round about, they were invisible at a distance and were seldom visited except now and then by an enterprising moneylender or trader. Indeed, without a Baiga guide, many of the villages could hardly be discovered, for nothing but occasional notches on the trunks of trees distinguished the tracks leading to them from the tracks worn by the wild beasts of the jungle. The forests in which these wild people dwell remote from the world are composed for the most part of the *sal* tree (*Shorea robusta*), almost the only evergreen forest tree in India. Throughout the summer its glossy dark-green foliage reflects the light in a thousand vivid tints; and just at the end of the dry season, when the parched vegetation all around is at its lowest ebb, and before the first rains of the monsoon have refreshed the thirsty earth, the *sal* tree bursts out into a fresh garment of the brightest and softest green. The traveller who has lingered late in the highlands is charmed by the approach of a second spring, and, with the notes of the cuckoo and the deep musical cooing of pigeons in his ear, he might almost fancy himself in England, if it were not for the light feathery foliage of the bamboo thickets, which remind him that he is in India.[1]

How a Baiga priest lays the ghosts of men who have been killed by tigers, and so checks the ravages of the ferocious animals.

In the country where the Baigas dwell they are regarded as the most ancient inhabitants and accordingly they usually act as priests of the indigenous gods.[2] Certainly there is reason to believe that in this part of the hills they are predecessors of the Gonds, towards whom they occupy a position of acknowledged superiority, refusing to eat with them and lending them their priests or enchanters for the performance of those rites which the Gonds, as newcomers, could not properly celebrate. Among these rites the most dangerous is that of laying the ghost of a man who has been

[1] Captain J. Forsyth, *The Highlands of India* (London, 1871), pp. 357 *sq.*, 359 *sqq.*; R. V. Russell, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), ii. 77, 80.

[2] R. V. Russell, *op. cit.* ii. 78.

killed by a tiger. Man-eating tigers have always been numerous in Mandla, the breed being fostered by the large herds of cattle which pasture in the country during a part of the year, while the withdrawal of the herds for another part of the year, to regions where the tigers cannot follow them, instigates the hungry brutes to pounce from their covers in the tall grass on passing men and women. When such an event has taken place with fatal results, the Baiga priest or enchanter proceeds to the scene of the catastrophe, provided with articles, such as fowls and rice, which are to be offered to the ghost of the deceased. Arrived at the spot, he makes a small cone out of the blood-stained earth to represent either the dead man or one of his living relatives. His companions having retired a few paces, the priest drops on his hands and knees, and in that posture performs a series of antics which are supposed to represent the tiger in the act of destroying the man, while at the same time he seizes the lump of blood-stained earth in his teeth. One of the party then runs up and taps him on the back with a small stick. This perhaps means that the tiger is killed or otherwise rendered harmless, for the priest at once lets the mud cone fall into the hands of one of the party. It is then placed in an ant-hill and a pig is sacrificed over it. Next day a small chicken is taken to the place, and after a mark, supposed to be the dead man's name, has been made on the fowl's head with red ochre, it is thrown back into the forest, while the priest cries out "Take this and go home." The ceremony is thought to lay the dead man's ghost, and at the same time to keep the tiger from doing any more harm. For the Baigas believe that if the ghost were not charmed to rest, it would ride on the tiger's head and incite him to fresh deeds of blood, guarding him at the same time from the attacks of human foes by his preternatural watchfulness.[1]

Man-eating lions in Samaria and man-eating tigers in India.

If we cannot suppose that the Israelitish priest at Bethel performed a similar pantomime for the repression of man-eating lions among the woods of Samaria, we shall perhaps be justified in assuming that the rites which he did celebrate

[1] Captain J. Forsyth, *The Highlands of Central India* (London, 1871), pp. 362 *sq.*; R. V. Russell, *The Tribes and Castes of Central India*, ii. 84.

Deities to be judged by the ethical standard of their human contemporaries.

were neither less nor more effectual than those which the jungle-priests of Mandla still observe for a like purpose over the blood-stained earth in their native forests. At all events, with these parallels before us we can better appreciate the gross religious impropriety of which the foreign settlers in Palestine were guilty, when they began by completely ignoring the old god of the land; it is no wonder that he was nettled at such treatment and took strong measures to impress his claims on the attention of the newcomers. Whether the despatch of lions to devour dissenters was the best possible means to promote the cause of pure religion is a question which might, perhaps, admit of discussion; but even if such a demonstration of religious truth should appear to modern minds rather forcible than convincing, it would be unreasonable to blame Jehovah for complying with, or even sharing, the current ideas of his time. A god, like a man, can only be fairly judged by the standard of the age to which he belongs; for experience seems to show that the ethical code of a deity is seldom superior, and may be distinctly inferior, to that of his human contemporaries.

PART IV

THE LAW

CHAPTER I

THE PLACE OF THE LAW IN JEWISH HISTORY

Place of the law in Jewish history.

BEFORE we pass to an examination of some particular Jewish laws, it may be well briefly to consider the place which the Law as a whole occupies in the history of Israel, so far as that place has been determined by the critical analysis of modern scholars.

Late date of the Pentateuchal legislation in its present form.

The most important and the best attested result of linguistic and historical criticism applied to the Old Testament is the proof that the Pentateuchal legislation, in the form in which we now possess it, cannot have been promulgated by Moses in the desert and in Moab before the entrance of the Israelites into Palestine, and that it can only have assumed its final shape at some time after the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in the year 586 B.C., when the Jews were carried away into exile. In short, the legal portion of the Pentateuch, as we now have it, belongs not to the earliest but to a late date in the history of Israel; far from having been promulgated before the nation took possession of the Promised Land, very little of it appears to have been written and published till near the end of the national independence, and the bulk of it, comprising what the critics call the Priestly Code, seems to have been composed for the first time in its present form and committed to writing either during or after the captivity.[1]

Law a gradual growth, not a sudden creation.

But it is necessary to distinguish carefully between the age of the laws themselves and the dates when they were first given to the world in the shape of written codes. A

[1] For reference to the authorities see below, p. 98, note[1].

very little thought will satisfy us that laws in general do not spring armed cap-à-pie into existence like Athena from the head of Zeus, at the moment when they are codified. Legislation and codification are two very different things. Legislation is the authoritative enactment of certain rules of conduct which have either not been observed or have not been legally binding before the acts enforcing them were passed by the supreme authority. But even new laws are seldom or never complete innovations; they nearly always rest upon and presuppose a basis of existing custom and public opinion which harmonize more or less with the new laws, and have long silently prepared for their reception in the minds of the people. The most despotic monarch in the world could not force upon his subjects an absolutely new law, which should run counter to the whole bent and current of their natural disposition, outraging all their hereditary opinions and habits, flouting all their most cherished sentiments and aspirations. Even in the most seemingly revolutionary enactment there is always a conservative element which succeeds in securing the general assent and obedience of a community. Only a law which in some measure answers to a people's past has any power to mould that people's future. To reconstruct human society from the foundations upward is a visionary enterprise, harmless enough so long as it is confined to the Utopias of philosophic dreamers, but dangerous and possibly disastrous when it is attempted in practice by men, whether demagogues or despots, who by the very attempt prove their ignorance of the fundamental principles of the problem they rashly set themselves to solve. Society is a growth, not a structure; and though we may modify that growth and mould it into fairer forms, as the gardener by his art has evolved blooms of lovelier shape and richer hue from the humble flowers of the field and the meadow, the hedgerow and the river-bank, we can as little create society afresh as the gardener can create a lily or a rose. Thus in every law, as in every plant, there is an element of the past, an element which, if we could trace it to its ultimate source, would lead us backwards to the earliest stages of human life in the one case and of plant life in the other.

And when we pa possible antiquity ss from legislation to codification, the seems almost s of the laws codified is so obvious that it famous of all uperfluous to insist upon it. The most is a compilat codes, the *Digest* or *Pandects* of Justinian, jurists in tion of extracts from the works of older Roman carefully he very words of the writers, all of whom are not a se named in every separate citation; thus the code is old lawies of new laws, it is simply a new collection of the centuri s which had obtained in the Roman Empire for French s. Of modern codes the most celebrated is the that ir code issued by Napoleon, but though it superseded pr udemmense number of separate local systems of juris- Fr ance, of which it was observed that a traveller in no me changed laws oftener than he changed horses, it by the ceans formed an entirely novel body of legislation; on law, ontrary, it is "the product of Roman and customary of together with the ordinances of the kings and the laws woulhe Revolution."[1] But to multiply modern instances d be superfluous.

Distinction between legislation and codification.

pro n the Semitic world the course of legislation has w bly been similar. The most ancient code in the k which has come down to us is that of Hammurabi, is f Babylon, who reigned about 2100 B.C.; but there we reason to suppose that the enactments which it contains con e all brand-new creations of the royal legislator; on the he trary, probability and evidence alike favour the view that of i erely erected his structure of law upon an old foundation to h mmemorial custom and usage, which had come down Sem im, at least in part, from the ancient predecessors of the een ites in Babylonia, the Sumerians, and had for long ages consecrated by popular prejudice, sanctioned by

Many of the Hebrew laws far more ancient than the date when they were codified.

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Ninth ion, vi. (Edinburgh, 1887) p. 105, "Code." In his *Siècle de Louis* chap. xlii.) Voltaire arraigns the licity and confusion of French Aft s of law before the Revolution. Roman speaking of the forty thousand in France laws which claimed authority *quarante m* he proceeds: "*Outre ces jours quelq illes lois, dont on cite tou- cinq cent qu u'une au hasard, nous avons en comptant les petites villes et même quelques bourgs, qui dérogent aux usages de la juridiction principale; de sorte qu'un homme qui court la poste en France change de lois plus souvent qu'il ne change de chevaux, comme on l'a déjà dit, et qu'un avocat qui sera très savant dans sa ville ne sera qu'un ignorant dans la ville voisine*" (Voltaire, *Siècles de Louis XIV et de Louis XV*, Paris, 1820, iv. 182).

kings, and administered by judges.[1] Similarly the critics who assign the great bulk of the so-called Mosaic legislation to the ages immediately preceding or following at no long interval the loss of national independence, fully recognize that even in its latest form the Law not only records but enforces customs and ceremonial institutions, of which many, and among them the most fundamental, are undoubtedly far older than the time when the Pentateuch received its final form in the fifth century before our era. This conclusion as to the great antiquity of the chief ceremonial institutions of Israel is amply confirmed by such a comparison of them with the institutions of other peoples; for a few such comparison reveals in Hebrew usage not only marks of barbarism and even of savagery, which could not possibly have been imprinted on it for the first time when to it the final codification of the law, but must have adhered from ages which probably long preceded the dawn of history. A few such marks will be pointed out in the sequel but the number of them might easily be much enlarged. Such customs, for example, as circumcision, the ceremonial uncleanness of women, and the employment of scapegoats, have their analogues in the customs of savage tribes in many parts of the world.[3]

Historical reality of Moses assured, even if no particular laws can be definitely traced to his legislation.

What I have said may suffice to dissipate the misapprehension that, in assigning a late date to the final codification of Hebrew law, Biblical critics implicitly assume a late origin for all the laws embodied in the code. But it may be well before going farther to correct another possible misconception

[1] C. H. W. Johns, *Babylonian and Assyrian Laws, Contracts, and Letters* (Edinburgh, 1904), pp. 39 *sqq.*; Stanley A. Cook, *The Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi* (London, 1903), p. 42.

[2] See for example W. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, Second Edition (London and Edinburgh, 1892), pp. 344 *sq.*, 382 *sq.*; S. R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, Ninth Edition (Edinburgh, 1913), pp. 142 *sqq.*, 151-154; Estlin Carpenter and G. Harford-Battersby, *The Hexateuch* (London, 1900), i. 141 *sqq.*; A. T. Chapman, *Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Cambridge, 1911), pp. 183, 186 *sqq.*; W. H. Bennett, *Exodus*, pp. 3[illegible] (*The Century Bible*).

[3] For evidence of the diffusion of circumcision among savage and [illegible] races, see R. Andree, *Ethnographische Parallelen und Vergleiche*, Neue [illegible]ged. (Leipsic, 1889), pp. 166-212. [illegible]ess of evidence might be considerably enl[illegible] *Golden Bough*, ii. *Tabooing of the Beautiful*, i. 22 *sqq.* As to the ceremonial uncleanness of women among savages, see [illegible]ne employ-ment of scapegoats by s[illegible]vages and [illegible]pp. 31 *sqq.*; *The Scapegoat*,

which might arise in regard to the critical doctrine. Because little or nothing of the so-called Mosaic legislation in the Pentateuch can be proved to have emanated from Moses, it by no means follows that the great lawgiver was a mere mythical personage, a creation of popular or priestly fancy, invented to explain the origin of the religious and civil constitution of the nation. Any such inference would do violence, not only to the particular evidence which speaks in favour of the historical reality of Moses, but to the general laws of probability; for great religious and national movements seldom or never occur except under the driving force of great men. The origin of Israel and Judaism without Moses would be hardly more intelligible than the origin of Buddhism without Buddha, the origin of Christianity without Christ, or the origin of Mohammedanism without Mohammed. There is, indeed, a tendency in some quarters at the present day to assume that history is made by the blind collective impulses of the multitude without the initiative and direction of extraordinary minds; but this assumption, born of or fostered by the false and pernicious doctrine of the natural equality of men, contradicts both the teaching of history and the experience of life. The multitude needs a leader, and without him, though it possesses a large faculty of destruction, it possesses little or none of construction. Without men great in thought, in word, in action, and in their influence over their fellows, no great nation ever was or ever will be built up. Moses was such a man, and he may justly rank as the real founder of Israel. Stripped of the miraculous features, which gather round the memory of popular heroes, as naturally as moss and lichens gather round stones, the account given of him in the earlier Hebrew histories is probably in substance correct: he rallied the Israelites against their oppressors in Egypt, led them to freedom in the wilderness, moulded them into a nation, impressed on their civil and religious institutions the stamp of his own remarkable genius, and having guided them to Moab, he died in sight of the Promised Land, which he was not to enter.[1]

[1] This appears to be substantially the view taken of Moses by the best modern critics. See, for example, J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the His-*

Three bodies of law distinguished in the Pentateuch, viz., the Book of the Covenant, the Deuteronomic Code, and the Priestly Code.

In the complex mass of laws which compose a large part of the Pentateuch critics now generally distinguish at least three separate groups or bodies of law, which differ from each other in character and date. These are, in chronological order, the Book of the Covenant, the Deuteronomic Code, and the Priestly Code. A brief notice of these documents may help the reader to understand the place which each of them occupies in the history of Jewish legislation, so far as it has been determined by the investigations of the critics. The arguments in support of these conclusions are too numerous and complex to be cited here; the reader who desires to acquaint himself with them will find them fully stated in many easily accessible works on the subject.[1]

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tory of Israel, translated by J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies (Edinburgh, 1885), pp. 429 *sqq.*, particularly 438 *sq.*: "The historical tradition which has reached us relating to the period of the judges and of the kings of Israel is the main source, though only of course in an indirect way, of our knowledge of Mosaism. But within the Pentateuch itself also the *historical* tradition about Moses (which admits of being distinguished, and must carefully be separated, from the *legislative*, although the latter often clothes itself in narrative form) is in its main features manifestly trustworthy, and can only be explained as resting on actual facts. From the historical tradition, then, it is certain that Moses was the founder of the Torah. But the legislative tradition cannot tell us what were the positive contents of *his* Torah. In fact it can be shown that throughout the whole of the older period the Torah was no finished legislative code, but consisted entirely of the oral decisions and instructions of the priests; as a whole it was potential only; what actually existed were the individual sentences given by the priesthood as they were asked for. Thus Moses was not regarded as the promulgator once for all of a national constitution, but rather as the first to call into activity the actual sense for law and justice, and to begin the series of oral decisions which were continued after him by the priests. He was the founder of the nation out of which the Torah and prophecy came as later growths. He laid the basis of Israel's subsequent peculiar individuality, not by any one formal act, but in virtue of his having throughout the whole of his long life been the people's leader, judge, and centre of union." Compare W. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, Second Edition, pp. 304 *sq.*; S. R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, Ninth Edition, p. 152; R. Kittel, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, Zweite Auflage (Gotha, 1909–1912), i. 546 *sqq.*; K. Budde, *Geschichte der althebräische Litteratur* (Leipsic, 1906), p. 94; E. Kautsch, "Religion of Israel," in J. Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Extra volume (Edinburgh, 1909), pp. 624 *sq.*

[1] The literature on the subject is large. The following works will probably suffice to give most students all the information they need: J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, translated by J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies (Edinburgh, 1885), pp. 1 *sqq.*; W. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, Second Edition (London and Edinburgh, 1892), pp. 226 *sqq.*; S. R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, Ninth Edition (Edinburgh, 1913), pp.

The Book of the Covenant.

The oldest code in the Pentateuch is generally acknowledged to be what is called the Book of the Covenant, comprising Exodus xx. 22-xxiii. 33. This has been named the First Legislation.[1] Closely related to it is Exodus xxxiv. 11-27, which is sometimes called the Little Book of the Covenant.[2] The Book of the Covenant is embedded in the Elohistic document, which is generally believed to have been written in northern Israel not later than the early part of the eighth century B.C. The Little Book of the Covenant is embedded in the Jehovistic Document, which is generally believed to have been written in Judea somewhat earlier than the Elohistic document, perhaps in the ninth century B.C.[3] But the laws themselves probably existed as a separate code or codes long before they were incorporated in these documents; and even before they had been codified the laws may be assumed to have been generally observed as customary regulations, many of them perhaps from a time beyond the memory of man. As a whole the Book of the Covenant reflects life in the days of the early kings and judges. "The society contemplated in this legislation

116 *sqq.*; (Bishop) H. E. Ryle, *The Canon of the Old Testament* (London, 1892), pp. 22 *sqq.*; E. Kautsch, "Abriss der Geschichte des alttestamentlichen Schrifttums," in *Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments übersetzt* (Freiburg i. B. and Leipsic, 1894), ii. 136 *sqq.*; J. Estlin Carpenter and G. Harford-Battersby, *The Hexateuch* (London, 1900), i. 23 *sqq.*; G. B. Gray, "Law Literature," *Encyclopædia Biblica* (London, 1899–1903), iii. 2730 *sqq.*; C. F. Kent, *Israel's Laws and Legal Precedents* (New York, 1907), pp. 8 *sqq.*; W. H. Bennett and W. F. Adeney, *A Biblical Introduction*, Fifth Edition (London, 1908), pp. 15 *sqq.*; K. Budde, *Geschichte der althebräische Litteratur* (Leipsic, 1906), pp. 32 *sqq.*; A. T. Chapman, *An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Cambridge, 1911). The critical conclusions are also accepted and for the most part clearly stated and explained in the introductions to the various volumes of the Pentateuch in *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* and *The Century Bible*. While a general agreement appears now to have been reached by the best critics as to the character and historical order of the various documents which compose the Hexateuch, difference of opinion still exists on a number of subordinate questions, such as the oldest version of the Decalogue, the precise date of the Deuteronomic Code, the question whether the Holiness Code (Leviticus xvii.-xxvi.) preceded or followed Ezekiel, and the question whether the "book of the law of Moses," which Ezra read to the congregation, comprised the whole Pentateuch or only the Priestly Code. But these minor differences do not invalidate the general conclusions as to which agreement has been attained.

[1] W. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, Second Edition, p. 318.

[2] A. T. Chapman, *Introduction to the Pentateuch*, pp. 110 *sq.*

[3] As to the Elohistic and Jehovistic Documents, see above, vol. i. pp. 131, 134 *sqq.*

is of very simple structure. The basis of life is agricultural. Cattle and agricultural produce are the elements of wealth, and the laws of property deal almost exclusively with them. The principles of civil and criminal justice are those still current among the Arabs of the desert. They are two in number, retaliation and pecuniary compensation. Murder is dealt with by the law of blood-revenge, but the innocent manslayer may seek asylum at God's altar. With murder are ranked man-stealing, offences against parents, and witchcraft. Other injuries are occasions of self-help or of private suits to be adjusted at the sanctuary. Personal injuries fall under the law of retaliation, just as murder does. Blow for blow is still the law of the Arabs, and in Canaan no doubt, as in the desert, the retaliation was usually sought in the way of self-help."[1]

The Deuteronomic Code promulgated by King Josiah in 621 B.C.

The second code which critics distinguish in the Pentateuch is the Deuteronomic. It includes the greater part of our present book of Deuteronomy, with the exception of the historical introduction[2] and the closing chapters.[3] Modern critics appear in general to agree that the Deuteronomic Code is substantially the "book of the law" which was found in the temple at Jerusalem in the year 621 B.C., and which King Josiah took as the basis of his religious reformation.[4] The main features of the reform were, first, the suppression of all the local sanctuaries or "high places" throughout the land, and, second, the concentration of the ceremonial worship of Jehovah at the temple in Jerusalem

[1] W. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, Second Edition, pp. 340 *sq.* As to the Book of the Covenant see further W. H. Bennett, *Exodus*, pp. 13 *sqq.* (*The Century Bible*); S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus* (Cambridge, 1911), pp. lxi-lxiii, 202-205.

[2] Chapters i.-iii.

[3] Chapters xxix.-xxxiv.

[4] 2 Kings xxii.-xxiii. 24. However, the now generally accepted identification of the Deuteronomic Code with Josiah's "book of the law" is rejected by Professor R. H. Kennett, who holds that Deuteronomy is a work of the Exilic period, having been written by a Jew or Jews of Palestine in the generation which closed about 520 B.C.; thus in his view the composition of the book fell about a century later than is commonly supposed. See R. H. Kennett, "The Date of Deuteronomy," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vii. (Oxford, 1906), pp. 481-500; *id.*, in J. Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vii. (Edinburgh, 1914), *s.v.* "Israel," pp. 447 *sqq.* His arguments deserve, and doubtless will receive, careful consideration from Biblical critics, but it would be out of place to discuss them here. For the purpose of this work I must be content to follow the general consensus of scholars.

alone. These measures are strongly inculcated in Deuteronomy; and from the lessons of that book the reforming king appears to have derived both the ideals which he set himself to convert into realities and the warm religious zeal which animated and sustained him in his arduous task. For the deep impression made on his mind by the reading of the book is easily accounted for by the blessings which the writer of Deuteronomy promises as the reward of obedience to the law, and by the curses which he denounces as the punishment of disobedience.[1]

Importance of Josiah's reformation: a written code substituted for oral tradition.

The reformation thus inaugurated by Josiah was of great importance not only for the measures which it enforced but for the manner in which they were promulgated. It was the first time, so far as we know, in the history of Israel that a written code was ever published with the authority of the government to be the supreme rule of life of the whole nation. Hitherto law had been customary, not statutory; it had existed for the most part merely as usages, with which every one complied in deference to public opinion and from force of habit; its origin was either explained by ancient tradition or altogether lost in the mists of antiquity. It is true that some of the customs had been reduced to writing in the form of short codes; at least one such volume is known to us in the Book of the Covenant. But it does not appear that these works received any official sanction; they were probably mere manuals destined for private circulation. The real repositories of the laws were apparently the priests at the local sanctuaries, who handed down orally from generation to generation the ordinances of ritual and religion, with which in primitive society the rules of morality are almost inseparably united. On all points of doubtful usage, in all legal disputes, the priests were consulted by the people and gave their decisions, not so much in the capacity of ordinary human judges, as in that of the mouthpieces of the deity, whose will they consulted and interpreted by means of the lots or other oracular machinery. These oral decisions of the priests were the original law of the land; they were the *Torah* in its proper significance of authoritative direction or instruction, long before the application of

[1] Deuteronomy xxviii.

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that word came to be narrowed down, first to law in general, and afterwards to the written law of the Pentateuch in particular. But in its original sense of direction or teaching, the Torah was not limited to the lessons given by the priests; it included also the instructions and warnings which the prophets uttered under impulses which they and their hearers believed to be divine. There was thus a prophetic as well as a priestly Torah, but in the beginning and for long ages afterwards the two agreed in being oral and not written.[1]

The stereotyping of religion consequent on the change from oral tradition to a written code.

The publication of the Deuteronomic Code in written form marked an era in the history not only of the Jewish people but of humanity. It was the first step towards the canonization of Scripture and thereby to the substitution of the written for the spoken word as the supreme and infallible rule of conduct. The accomplishment of the process by the completion of the Canon in the succeeding centuries laid thought under shackles from which in the western world it has never since succeeded in wholly emancipating itself. The spoken word before was free, and therefore thought was free, since speech is nothing but thought made vocal and articulate. The prophets enjoyed full freedom both of thought and of speech, because their thoughts and words were believed to be inspired by the deity. Even the priests were far from being hide-bound by tradition; though God was not supposed to speak by their lips, they no doubt allowed themselves considerable latitude in working the oracular machinery of lots and other mechanical devices through which the deity vouchsafed to manifest his will to anxious inquirers. But when once the oracles were committed to writing they were stereotyped and immoveable; from the fluid they had solidified into the crystalline form with all its hardness and durability; a living growth had been replaced by a dead letter; the scribe had ousted the prophet and even the priest, so far as the

[1] J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, translated by J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies (Edinburgh, 1885), pp. 393 *sqq.*, 435 *sq.*; W. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, Second Edition, pp. 298 *sqq.*; I. Benzinger, *Hebräische Archäologie*[2] (Tübingen, 1907), pp. 346 *sqq.*; A. T. Chapman, *Introduction to the Pentateuch*, pp. 256 *sqq.*

functions of the priest were oracular and not sacrificial. Henceforth Israel became the "people of the book"; the highest wisdom and knowledge were to be obtained not by independent observation, not by the free investigation of man and of nature, but by the servile interpretation of a written record. The author must make room for the commentator; the national genius, which had created the Bible, accommodated itself to the task of writing the Talmud.

The exact date of the composition, as distinguished from the promulgation of the Deuteronomic Code is uncertain.

While we can ascertain with a fair degree of assurance the date when the Deuteronomic Code was published, we have no information as to the date when it was composed. It was discovered and promulgated in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign (621 B.C.),[1] and it must have been written either in the preceding part of the king's reign or under his predecessor Manasseh; for internal evidence proves that the book cannot be older, and that its composition must therefore have fallen some time within the seventh century before our era. On the whole, the most probable hypothesis appears to be that Deuteronomy was written in the reign of Manasseh, and that under the oppressive and cruel rule of that bad king it was concealed for safety in the temple, where it lay hid till it came to light during the repairs of the sacred edifice instituted by the devout Josiah.[2] It has,

[1] 2 Kings xxii. 3 *sqq.*

[2] This is the view of Principal J. Skinner (*Kings*, p. 412, in *The Century Bible*), and E. Kautsch ("Abriss der Geschichte des alttestamentlichen Schrifttums," in *Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments*, Freiburg i. Baden and Leipsic, 1894, ii. 167 *sq.*). In his *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, Ninth Edition (Edinburgh, 1913), pp. 86 *sq.*, S. R. Driver argued that Deuteronomy was not later than the reign of Manasseh; but in his *Commentary on Deuteronomy*, Third Edition (Edinburgh, 1902), pp. xlix *sqq.*, he seems to leave it an open question whether the book is to be assigned to the reign of Manasseh or to the reign of Josiah. Bishop Ryle inclines to hold that "the book was compiled in the latter part of Hezekiah's, or in the early part of Manasseh's, reign" (*The Canon of the Old Testament*, London, 1892, p. 56). "By others, on the contrary, the calm and hopeful spirit which the author displays, and the absence even of any covert allusion to the special troubles of Manasseh's time, are considered to be objections to that date: the book, it is argued, is better understood as the direct outcome of the reforming tendencies which the early years of Josiah must have called forth, and as designed from the first with the view of promoting the ends which its author labours to attain" (S. R. Driver, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, Third Edition, pp. liii *sq.*). This last view is preferred by Professor C. H. Kent (*Israel's Laws and Legal Precedents*, New York, 1907, p. 33), and more doubtfully by H. Wheeler Robinson (*Deuteronomy and Joshua*, Edinburgh, 1907, p. 16, in *The Century Bible*).

indeed, sometimes been suspected that the book was a forgery of the temple priests, who contrived by a devout fraud to palm it off as a work of hoar antiquity on the guileless young king. But that the suspicion is as unjust as it is uncharitable will perhaps appear to any one who candidly considers the liberal provision which the new code made for the reception at Jerusalem of the rural clergy whom the destruction of the local sanctuaries had stripped of their benefices. These disestablished and disendowed priests, reduced to the level of homeless landlopers, had only to come up to the capital to be put on a level with their urban colleagues and enjoy all the dignity and emoluments of the priesthood.[1] We shall probably be doing no more than justice to the city clergy by supposing that they held firmly to the good old maxim *Beati possidentes,* and that except under the cruel compulsion of the law they were not very likely to open their arms and their purses to their needy brethren from the country.

The ethical and religious character of Deuteronomy.

Whoever was the unknown author of Deuteronomy, there can be no question that he was a disinterested patriot and reformer, animated by a true love of his country and an honest zeal for pure religion and morality, which he believed to be imperilled by the superstitious practices and lascivious excesses of the local sanctuaries. Whether he was a priest or a prophet, it is difficult to judge, for the book exhibits a remarkable fusion of priestly, or at all events legal, matter with the prophetic spirit. That he wrote under the inspiring influence of the great prophets of the eighth century, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, seems certain ;[2] accepting their view of the superiority of the moral to the ritual law, he propounds a system of legislation which he bases on religious and ethical principles, on piety and humanity, on the love of God and of man ; and in recommending these principles to his hearers and readers he falls naturally into a strain of earnest and even pathetic pleading, which is more akin to the warmth and animation of the orator than to the judicial calm and

[1] Deuteronomy xviii. 6-8, compared with 2 Kings xxiii. 8 *sq.* From the latter of these passages we learn that, contrary to the provision made for them in the Deuteronomic code, the priests of the old defiled sanctuaries were not allowed to minister at the altar in Jerusalem. Compare W. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church,* Second edition, p. 363.

[2] Compare A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh, 1911), pp. 360 *sq.*

gravity of the lawgiver. The impression which he makes on a modern reader is that of a preacher rolling out the stream of his impassioned eloquence to a rapt audience in the resounding aisles of some vast cathedral. We seem almost to see the kindling eyes and the eager gestures of the speaker, to catch the ring of his sonorous accents echoing along the vaulted roof and thrilling his hearers with alternate emotions of comfortable assurance and hope, of poignant remorse and repentance, of overwhelming terror and despair. And it is on a high note of awful warning, of fierce denunciation of the wrath to come on the sinful and disobedient, that the voice of the preacher finally dies away into silence.[1] In sustained declamatory power, as has been well observed by an eminent critic, the orator's peroration stands unrivalled in the Old Testament.[2]

Doubts as to the theoretic and practical value of the reformation in some of its aspects.

Yet though the reform was unquestionably advocated from the purest motives and carried through on a wave of genuine enthusiasm, the philosophic student of religion may be allowed to express a doubt whether, contemplated from the theoretical standpoint, the centralization of worship at a single sanctuary did not mark rather a retrogression than an advance; and whether, regarded from the practical standpoint, it may not have been attended by some inconveniences which went a certain way to balance its advantages. On the one hand, to modern minds, habituated to the idea of God as bounded by no limits either of space or of time, and therefore as equally accessible to his worshippers everywhere and always, the notion that he could be properly worshipped only at Jerusalem appears childish, if not absurd. Certainly the abstract conception of an omnipresent deity finds a fitter expression in a multitude of sanctuaries scattered over the length and breadth of the land than in one solitary sanctuary at the capital. And on the other hand, considered from the side of practical convenience, the old unreformed religion possessed some obvious advantages over its rival. Under the ancient system every man had, so to speak, his God at his own door,

Theoretical inadequacy of the one sanctuary.

Practical inconvenience of the one sanctuary.

[1] Deuteronomy xxviii. 68. The original book seems to have ended at this point. See above, p. 100.

[2] S. R. Driver, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, Third Edition, p. 303.

to whom he could resort on every occasion of doubt and difficulty, of sorrow and distress. Not so under the new system. To reach the temple at Jerusalem the peasant might often have to travel a long way, and with the engrossing occupations of his little farm he could seldom afford time for the journey. No wonder, therefore, if under the new dispensation he sometimes sighed for the old; no wonder if to him the destruction of the local sanctuaries should have appeared as shocking a sacrilege as to our own peasantry might seem the demolition of all the village churches in England, and the felling of the ancient elms and immemorial yews under whose solemn shade "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep." How sadly would our simple rustic folk miss the sight of the familiar grey tower or spire embosomed among trees or peeping over the shoulder of the hill! How often would they listen in vain for the sweet sound of Sabbath bells chiming across the fields and calling them to the house of prayer, where they and their forefathers had so often gathered to adore the common Father of all! We may suppose that it was not essentially different with the peasant of Judea when the reformation swept like a hurricane over the country-side. With a heavy heart he may have witnessed the iconoclasts at their work of destruction and devastation. It was there, on yonder hilltop, under the shade of that spreading thick-leaved oak that he and his fathers before him had brought, year after year, the first yellow sheaves of harvest and the first purple clusters of the vintage. How often had he seen the blue smoke of sacrifice curling up in the still air above the trees, and how often had he imagined God himself to be somewhere not far off—perhaps in yon rifted cloud through which the sunbeams poured in misty glory—there or somewhere near, inhaling the sweet savour and blessing him and his for the gift! And now the hilltop was bare and desolate; the ancient trees that had so long shaded it were felled, and the grey old pillar, on which he had so often poured his libation of oil, was smashed and its fragments littered the ground. God, it seems, had gone away; he had departed to the capital, and if the peasant would find him, he must follow him thither. A long and a weary journey it might be, and the countryman could only

The destruction of the local sanctuaries perhaps regretted by the peasantry.

undertake it at rare intervals, trudging over hill and dale with his offerings to thread his way through the narrow crowded streets of Jerusalem and to mingle in the noisy jostling throng within the temple precincts, there to wait with his lamb in a long line of footsore, travel-stained worshippers, while the butcher-priest, with tucked-up sleeves, was despatching the lambs of all in front of him; till his turn came at last, and his lamb's spurtling blood added a tiny rivulet to the crimson tide which flooded the courtyard. Well, they told him it was better so, and perhaps God really did prefer to dwell in these stately buildings and spacious courts, to see all that blood, and to hear all that chanting of the temple choir; but for his own part his thoughts went back with something like regret to the silence of the hilltop, with the shade of its immemorial trees and the far prospect over the peaceful landscape. Yet no doubt the priests were wiser than he; so God's will be done! Such may well have been the crude reflections of many a simple country soul on his first pilgrimage to Jerusalem after the reformation. Not a few of them, perhaps, then beheld the splendour and squalor of the great city for the first time; for we may suppose that the rustics of Judea were as stay-at-home in those days as the rural population in the remoter districts of England is now, of whom many live and die without ever having travelled more than a few miles from their native village.

Inadequacy of the reformation to stay the political catastrophe which it was intended to avert.

But in the kingdom of Judea the reformation had a very short course to run. From the time when Josiah instituted his measures for the religious and moral regeneration of the country, a generation hardly passed before the Babylonian armies swept down on Jerusalem, captured the city, and carried off the king and the flower of his people into captivity. The completion of the reforms was prevented by the same causes which had hastened their inception. For we cannot doubt that the growing fear of foreign conquest was one of the principal incentives which quickened the consciences and nerved the arms of the best Jews to set their house in order before it was too late, lest the same fate should overtake the Southern Kingdom at the hands of the Babylonians which had overtaken the Northern Kingdom a

century before at the hands of the Assyrians. The cloud had been gradually rising from the east and now darkened the whole sky of Judea. It was under the shadow of the coming storm and with the muttering of its distant thunder in their ears that the pious king and his ministers had laboured at the reformation by which they hoped to avert the threatened catastrophe. For with that unquestioning faith in the supernatural which was the strength, or the weakness, of Israel's attitude towards the world, they traced the national danger to national sin, and believed that the march of invading armies could be arrested by the suppression of heathen worship and a better regulation of the sacrificial ritual. Menaced by the extinction of their political independence, it apparently never occurred to them to betake themselves to those merely carnal weapons to which a less religious people would instinctively turn in such an emergency. To build fortresses, to strengthen the walls of Jerusalem, to arm and train the male population, to seek the aid of foreign allies,—these were measures which to the Gentile mind common sense might seem to dictate, but which to the Jew might appear to imply an impious distrust of Jehovah, who alone could save his people from their enemies. In truth the ancient Hebrew as little conceived the action of purely natural causes in the events of history as in the fall of the rain, the course of the wind, or the changes of the seasons; alike in the affairs of man and in the processes of nature he was content to trace the finger of God, and this calm acquiescence in supernatural agency as the ultimate explanation of all things presented almost as great an obstacle to the cool concerting of political measures in the council-chamber as to the dispassionate investigation of physical forces in the laboratory.

The second reformation after the Exile, resulting in the Priestly Code, the third and latest body of law in the Pentateuch.

Nor was the faith of the Jews in their religious interpretation of history in the least shaken by the complete failure of Josiah's reformation to avert the national ruin. Their confidence in the virtue of religious rites and ceremonies as the prime necessity of national welfare, far from being abated by the collapse of reformation and kingdom together, was to all appearance rather strengthened than weakened by the catastrophe. Instead of being led to doubt the perfect

wisdom of the measures which they had adopted, they only concluded that they had not carried them out far enough; and accordingly no sooner were they settled as captives in Babylonia than they applied themselves to devise a far more elaborate system of religious ritual, by which they hoped to ensure a return of the divine favour and a restoration of the exiles to their own land. The first sketch of the new system was drawn up by Ezekiel in his banishment by the river Chebar. Himself a priest as well as a prophet, he must have been familiar with the ritual of the first temple, and the scheme which he propounded as an ideal programme of reform for the future was no doubt based on his experience of the past. But while it embraced much that was old, it also advocated much that was new, including ampler, more regular, and more solemn sacrifices, a more awful separation of the clergy from the laity, and a more rigid seclusion of the temple and its precincts from contact with the profane.[1] The contrast between Ezekiel, who followed, and the great prophets who preceded, the exile, is extraordinary. While they had laid all the emphasis of their teaching on moral virtue, and scouted the notion of rites and ceremonies as the best or the only means by which man can commend himself to God,[2] Ezekiel appears to invert the relation between the two things, for he has little to say of morality, but much to say of ritual. The programme which he published in the early years of the captivity was developed by later thinkers and writers of the priestly school among the exiles, till after a period of incubation, which lasted more than a century, the full-blown system of the Levitical law was ushered into the world by Ezra at Jerusalem in the year 444 B.C. The document which embodied the fruit of so much labour and thought was the Priestly Code, which forms the framework of the Pentateuch. With it the period of Judaism began, and the transformation of Israel from a nation into a church was complete. The Priestly Code, which set the coping-stone to the edifice, is the third and last body of law which critics

[1] Compare W. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, Second Edition, pp. 310 *sq.*, 374 *sqq.*

[2] See for example Isaiah i. 11-17; Amos v. 21-24; Micah vi. 6-8; Hosea vi. 6; Jeremiah vii. 21-23. Compare W. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, Second Edition, pp. 293 *sqq.*

distinguish in the Pentateuch. The lateness of its date is the fundamental doctrine of modern criticism applied to the Old Testament.[1]

[1] W. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, Second Edition, p. 421. As to the Priestly Code, see above, vol. i. pp. 131 *sqq.*; and as to the development of the ritual system between Ezekiel and Ezra, see W. Robertson Smith, *op. cit.* pp. 442-449; J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, translated by J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies (Edinburgh, 1885), pp. 404 *sqq.*

CHAPTER II

NOT TO SEETHE A KID IN ITS MOTHER'S MILK

The precept "not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk" one of the original Ten Commandments.

A MODERN reader is naturally startled when among the solemn commandments professedly given by God to ancient Israel he finds the precept, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk."[1] And his surprise is not lessened but greatly increased by an attentive study of one of the three passages in which the command is recorded; for the context of the passage seems to show, as some eminent critics, from Goethe downwards, have pointed out, that the injunction not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk was actually one of the original Ten Commandments.[2] The passage occurs in the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus. In this chapter we read an account of what purports to be the second revelation to Moses of the Ten Commandments, after that, in his anger at the idolatry of the Israelites, he had broken the tables of stone on which the first version of the commandments was written. What is professedly given us in the chapter is therefore a second edition of the Ten Commandments. That this is so

[1] Exodus xxiii. 19, xxxiv. 26; Deuteronomy xiv. 21. The late Professor T. K. Cheyne proposed to correct, or rather to corrupt, all three texts so as to read, "Thou shalt not clothe thyself with the garment of a Yerahme'elite woman." See his *Traditions and Beliefs of Ancient Israel* (London, 1907), p. 565.

[2] Professor Julius Wellhausen reached this conclusion independently before he found that he had been anticipated by Goethe. See J. Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments*[2] (Berlin, 1889), pp. 86 *sqq.*, 327-33; K. Budde, *Geschichte der althebräischen Litteratur* (Leipsic, 1906), pp. 94-6; W. E. Addis, in *Encyclopædia Biblica*, i. 1049 *sqq.*, *s.v.* "Decalogue"; G. F. Moore, in *Encyclopædia Biblica*, ii. 1445 *sqq.*, *s.v.* "Exodus"; G. B. Gray, in *Encyclopædia Biblica*, iii. 2734, *s.v.* "Law Literature"; B. Stade, *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Tübingen, 1905), pp. 197 *sqq.*; C. F. Kent, *Israel's Laws and Legal Precedents* (New York, 1907), pp. 16 *sqq.*

appears to be put beyond the reach of doubt by the verses which introduce and which follow the list of commandments. Thus the chapter begins, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon the tables the words that were on the first tables, which thou brakest."[1] Then follows an account of God's interview with Moses on Mount Sinai and of the second revelation of the commandments. And at the close of the passage we read, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments."[2] Thus unquestionably the writer of the chapter regarded the commandments given in it as the Ten Commandments.

The original version of the Ten Commandments.

But here a difficulty arises; for the commandments recorded in this chapter agree only in part with the commandments contained in the far more familiar version of the Decalogue which we read in the twentieth chapter of Exodus,[3] and again in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy.[4] Moreover, in that professedly second version of the Decalogue, with which we are here concerned, the commandments are not enunciated with the brevity and precision which characterize the first version, so that it is less easy to define them exactly. And the difficulty of disengaging them from the context is rather increased than diminished by the occurrence of a duplicate version in the Book of the Covenant,[5] which, as we saw, is generally recognized by modern critics as the oldest code in the Pentateuch.[6] At the same time, while it adds to the difficulty of disentangling the commandments from their setting, the occurrence of a duplicate version in the ancient Book of the Covenant furnishes a fresh guarantee of the genuine antiquity of that version of the Decalogue which includes the commandment, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk."

As to the great bulk of this ancient version of the Deca-

[1] Exodus xxxiv. 1.
[2] Exodus xxxiv. 27, 28.
[3] Exodus xx. 3-17.
[4] Deuteronomy v. 7-21.
[5] Exodus xx. 22-xxiii. 33.
[6] See above, pp. 99 *sq.*

logue critics are agreed; they differ only with regard to the identification of one or two of the ordinances, and with regard to the order of others. The following is the enumeration of the commandments which is given by Professor K. Budde in his *History of Ancient Hebrew Literature*.[1] It is based on the version of the Decalogue in the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus, but in respect of one commandment it prefers the parallel version of the Decalogue in the Book of the Covenant:—

The original version of the Ten Commandments according to K. Budde and J. Wellhausen.

1. Thou shalt worship no other god.
2. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.
3. All the firstborn are mine.
4. Six days shalt thou work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest.
5. The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep in the month when the corn is in ear.
6. Thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, even of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of in-gathering at the year's end.
7. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread.
8. The fat of my feast shall not remain all night until the morning.[2]
9. The first of the firstfruits of thy ground thou shalt bring unto the house of the Lord thy God.
10. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk.

The enumeration of the commandments proposed by Wellhausen is similar, except that he omits "Six days shalt thou work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest," and inserts instead of it, "Thou shalt observe the feast of in-

[1] K. Budde, *Geschichte des althebräischen Litteratur*, p. 95. The same restoration of the primitive Decalogue is adopted, with slight variations in the order of the commandments, by Professor C. F. Kent, *Israel's Laws and Legal Precedents* (New York, 1907), p. 21. A similar enumeration of the commandments is given by Professor W. H. Bennett in his commentary on Exodus, p. 255 (in *The Century Bible*), except that he omits the command, "The fat of my feast shall not remain all night until the morning," and substitutes for it, "Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel."

[2] The version of the commandment given in Exodus xxiii. 18 is here preferred to the different version in the parallel passage, Exodus xxxiv. 25, "Neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning."

gathering at the year's end" as a separate ordinance instead of as part of another commandment.[1]

The original version of the Ten Commandments according to R. H. Kennett.

In general agreement with the enumerations of Budde and Wellhausen is the list of commandments adopted by Professor R. H. Kennett; but he differs from Budde in treating the command of the feast of ingathering as a separate commandment; he differs from Wellhausen in retaining the command of the seventh day's rest; and he differs from both of them in omitting the command to make no molten gods. His reconstruction of the Decalogue, like theirs, is based mainly on the version of it in the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus, departures from that version being indicated by italics. It runs as follows:—[2]

1. *I am Jehovah thy God*, thou shalt worship no other God (*v.* 14).
2. The feast of unleavened cakes thou shalt keep: seven days thou shalt eat unleavened cakes (*v.* 18).
3. All that openeth the womb is mine; and all thy cattle that is male, the firstlings of ox and sheep (*v.* 19).
4. *My sabbaths shalt thou keep;* six days shalt thou work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest (*v.* 21).
5. The feast of weeks thou shalt celebrate, even the firstfruits of wheat harvest (*v.* 22).
6. The feast of in-gathering *thou shalt celebrate* at the end of the year (*v.* 22).
7. Thou shalt not sacrifice (*lit.* slay) my sacrificial blood upon leavened bread (*v.* 25).
8. *The fat of my feast shall not remain all night until the morning* (as in Exodus xxiii. 18). Exodus xxxiv. 25[b] limits this law to the Passover.

[1] J. Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments*,[2] pp. 331 *sq.* Wellhausen distinguishes twelve commandments in Exodus xxxiv., but he reduces them to ten by omitting (1) the command of the seventh day's rest, on the ground that it is out of place in the cycle of annual feasts, and (2) the command that all males should appear before the Lord thrice in the year (*v.* 23), on the ground that it is merely a recapitulation of the three preceding laws. Compare *Encyclopædia Biblica*, i. 1050.

[2] R. H. Kennett, B.D., "History of the Jewish Church from Nebuchadnezzar to Alexander the Great," in *Essays on some Biblical Questions of the Day, by Members of the University of Cambridge*, edited by H. B. Swete, D.D. (London, 1909), pp. 96-98.

9. The first of the firstfruits of thy ground thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God (*v.* 26).
10. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk (*v.* 26).

Contrast between the ritual and the moral versions of the Decalogue.

Whichever of these reconstructions of the Decalogue we adopt, its difference from that version of the Decalogue with which we are familiar is sufficiently striking. Here morality is totally absent. The commandments without exception refer purely to matters of ritual. They are religious in the strict sense of the word, for they define with scrupulous, almost niggling, precision the proper relation of man to God. But of the relations of man to man, not a word. The attitude of God to man in these commandments is like that of a feudal lord to his vassals. He stipulates that they shall render him his dues to the utmost farthing, but what they do to each other, so long as they do not interfere with the payment of his feu-duties, is seemingly no concern of his. How different from the six concluding commandments of the other version: "Honour thy father and thy mother. Thou shalt do no murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."[1]

The ritual version of the Decalogue probably older than the moral version.

If we ask which of these two discrepant versions of the Decalogue is the older, the answer cannot be doubtful. It would happily be contrary to all analogy to suppose that precepts of morality, which had originally formed part of an ancient code, were afterwards struck out of it to make room for precepts concerned with mere points of ritual. Is it credible that, for example, the command, "Thou shalt not steal," was afterwards omitted from the code and its place taken by the command, "The fat of my feast shall not remain all night until the morning"? or that the command, "Thou shalt do no murder," was ousted by the command, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk"? The whole course of human history refutes the supposition. All probability is in favour of the view that the moral version of the

[1] Exodus xx. 12-17.

Decalogue, if we may call it so from its predominant element, was later than the ritual version, because the general trend of civilization has been, still is, and we hope always will be, towards insisting on the superiority of morality to ritual. It was this insistence which lent force to the teaching, first, of the Hebrew prophets, and afterwards of Christ himself. We should probably not be far wrong in surmising that the change from the ritual to the moral Decalogue was carried out under prophetic influence.[1]

Suggested explanations of the command not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk.

But if we may safely assume, as I think we may, that the ritual version of the Decalogue is the older of the two, we have still to ask, Why was the precept not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk deemed of such vital importance that it was assigned a place in the primitive code of the Hebrews, while precepts which seem to us infinitely more important, such as the prohibitions of murder, theft, and adultery, were excluded from it? The commandment has proved a great stumbling-block to critics, and has been interpreted in many different ways.[2] In the whole body of ritual legislation, it has been said, there is hardly to be found a law which God more frequently inculcated or which men have more seriously

[1] In assuming the ritual version of the Decalogue to be older than the moral version, I agree with Professors Wellhausen, Budde, and Kennett (*ll.cc.*), W. E. Addis (*Encyclopædia Biblica*, i. 1050, *s.v.* "Decalogue"), G. B. Gray (*Encyclopædia Biblica*, iii. 2734, *s.v.* "Law Literature"), and B. Stade (*Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Tübingen, 1905, pp. 197 *sqq.*, 248 *sq.*). That the moral Decalogue was composed under prophetic influence is the opinion also of Addis and Stade (*ll.cc.*); it is "scarcely earlier in origin than the prophets of the eighth century" (G. B. Gray, *l.c.*). On the other hand, the moral Decalogue is held by some to be earlier than the ritual Decalogue, and to be indeed the oldest body of laws in the Pentateuch, lying at the foundation of all later Hebrew legislation. See (Bishop) H. E. Ryle, *The Canon of the Old Testament* (London, 1892), pp. 23 *sqq.*, 42; R. Kittel, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*[2] (Gotha, 1909–1912), i. 552 *sq.*; J. P. Peters, *The Religion of the Hebrews* (Boston and London, 1914), pp. 96 *sqq.* Some scholars, again, deny that ten commandments can be extracted from Exodus xxxiv., contending that the words in verse 28, "the ten commandments," are a gloss. This is the view of G. F. Moore (*Encyclopædia Biblica*, ii. 1446, *s.v.* "Exodus"), and K. Marti (*Geschichte der Israelitischen Religion*,[4] Strasburg, 1903, pp. 110 *sq.*). S. R. Driver seems to leave the question open (*The Book of Exodus*, Cambridge, 1911, p. 365).

[2] Some of these interpretations have been stated and discussed by the learned John Spencer, Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, in his treatise, *De legibus Hebraeorum ritualibus* (Hagae-Comitum, 1686), i. 270 *sqq.*, and by the learned French pastor Samuel Bochart in his *Hierozoicon* (Leyden, 1692), i. 634 *sqq.* See also August Dillmann's note on Exodus xxiii. 19 (*Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus*, Leipsic, 1880, pp. 250 *sq.*).

perverted than the prohibition to boil a kid in its mother's milk.[1] A precept which the deity, or at all events the lawgiver, took such particular pains to impress on the minds of the people must be well worthy of our attentive study, and if commentators have hitherto failed to ascertain its true meaning, their failure may be due to the standpoint from which they approached the question, or to the incompleteness of their information, rather than to the intrinsic difficulty of the problem itself. The supposition, for example, which has found favour both in ancient and modern times, that the precept is one of refined humanity,[2] conflicts with the whole tenor of the code in which the command is found. A legislator who, so far as appears from the rest of the primitive Decalogue, paid no attention to the feelings of human beings, was not likely to pay much to the maternal feelings of goats. More plausible is the view that the prohibition was directed against some magical or idolatrous rite which the lawgiver reprobated and desired to suppress. This theory has been accepted as the most probable by some eminent scholars from Maimonides to W. Robertson Smith,[3] but it rests on no positive evidence; for little or no weight can be given to the unsupported statement of an anonymous mediaeval writer, a member of the Jewish Karaite sect, who says that "there was a custom among the ancient heathen, who, when they had gathered all the crops, used to boil a kid in its mother's milk, and then, as a magical rite, sprinkle the milk on trees, fields, gardens, and orchards, believing that in this way they would render them more fruitful the following year."[4] So far as this explanation assumes a superstition to lie at the root of the prohibition, it may well be correct; and accordingly it may be worth while to inquire whether analogous prohibitions, with

[1] J. Spencer, *De legibus Hebraeorum ritualibus*, i. 270, "*E toto Legum ritualium numero Legem vix ullam reperire possumus, quam Deus frequentius inculcavit, aut homines a sensu genuino magis detorserunt.*"

[2] This was the view of Clement of Alexandria in antiquity (*Strom.* ii. 18. 94, p. 478, ed. Potter), and it has been shared by some Jewish writers (J. Spencer, *De legibus Hebraeorum ritualibus*, i. 270 *sq.*) and by S. Bochart (*Hierozoicon*, i. 637 *sq.*) in modern times.

[3] See J. Spencer, *De legibus Hebraeorum ritualibus*, i. 272 *sqq.* (who argues at length in favour of the theory); A. Dillmann, *Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus* (Leipsic, 1880), p. 251; W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, New Edition (London, 1894), p. 221, note.

[4] Quoted by J. Spencer, *De legibus Hebraeorum ritualibus*, i. 271.

the reasons for them, can be discovered among rude pastoral tribes in modern times, for on the face of it the rule is likely to be observed rather by people who depend on their flocks and herds than by such as subsist on the produce of their fields and gardens.

Aversion of pastoral tribes in Africa to boil milk for fear of injuring their cattle.

Now among pastoral tribes in Africa at the present day there appears to be a widely spread and deeply rooted aversion to boil the milk of their cattle, the aversion being founded on a belief that a cow whose milk has been boiled will yield no more milk, and that the animal may even die of the injury thereby done to it. For example, the milk and butter of cows form a large part of the diet of the Mohammedan natives of Sierra Leone and the neighbourhood; but "they never boil the milk, for fear of causing the cow to become dry, nor will they sell milk to any one who should practise it. The Bulloms entertain a similar prejudice respecting oranges, and will not sell them to those who throw the skins into the fire, 'lest it occasion the unripe fruit to fall off.'"[1] Thus it appears that with these people the objection to boil milk is based on the principle of sympathetic magic. Even after the milk has been drawn from the cow it is supposed to remain in such vital connexion with the animal that any injury done to the milk will be sympathetically felt by the cow. Hence to boil the milk in a pot is like boiling it in the cow's udders; it is to dry up the fluid at its source. This explanation is confirmed by the beliefs of the Mohammedans of Morocco, though with them the prohibition to boil a cow's milk is limited to a certain time after the birth of the calf. They think that "if milk boils over into the fire the cow will have a diseased udder, or it will give no milk, or its milk will be poor in cream; and if biestings happen to fall into the fire, the cow or the calf will probably die. Among the Ait Wäryâgäl the biestings must not be boiled after the third day and until forty days have passed after the birth of the calf; if they were boiled during this period, the calf would die or the milk of the cow would give only a small quantity

The aversion based on the principle of sympathetic magic.

[1] Thomas Winterbotham, M.D., *An Account of the Native Africans in the Neighbourhood of Sierra Leone* (London, 1803), pp. 69 *sq.* Curiously enough, these people abhor the milk of goats, though they eat the flesh of the animals.

of butter."[1] Here the prohibition to boil milk is not absolute but is limited to a certain time after the birth of the calf, during which the cow may be thought to stand in a closer relation of sympathy than ever afterwards both to her calf and to her milk. The limitation of the rule is therefore significant and rather confirms than invalidates the explanation of the prohibition here suggested. A further confirmation is supplied by the superstition as to the effect on the cow of allowing its milk to fall into the fire; if such an accident should happen at ordinary times, the cow or its milk is believed to suffer, but if it should happen shortly after the birth of its calf, when the thick curdy milk bears the special English name of biestings, the cow or the calf is expected to die. Clearly the notion is that if at such a critical time the biestings were to fall into the fire, it is much the same thing as if the cow or the calf were to fall into the fire and to be burnt to death. So close is the sympathetic bond then supposed to be between the cow, her calf, and her milk. The train of thought may be illustrated by a parallel superstition of the Toradjas in Central Celebes. These people make much use of palm-wine, and the lees of the wine form an excellent yeast in the baking of bread. But some Toradjas refuse to part with the lees of the wine for that purpose to Europeans, because they fear that the palm-tree from which the wine was extracted would soon yield no more wine and would dry up, if the lees were brought into contact with the heat of the fire in the process of baking.[2] This reluctance to subject the lees of palm-wine to the heat of fire lest the palm-tree from which the wine was drawn should thereby be desiccated, is exactly parallel to the reluctance of African tribes to subject milk to the heat of fire lest the cow from which the milk was extracted should dry up or actually perish. Exactly parallel, too, is the reluctance of the Bulloms to allow orange-skins to be thrown into the fire, lest the tree from which the oranges were gathered should be baked by the heat, and its fruit should consequently drop off.[3]

Parallel superstition as to the lees of palm-wine among the Toradjas of Celebes.

[1] Edward Westermarck, *The Moorish Conception of Holiness* (Helsingfors, 1916), pp. 144 *sq.*

[2] N. Adriani en A. C. Kruijt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes* (Batavia, 1912–1914), ii. 209.

[3] See above, p. 118.

The objection to boil milk for fear of injuring the cows among pastoral tribes of Central and Eastern Africa.

The objection to boil milk for fear of injuring the cows is shared by pastoral tribes of Central and Eastern Africa. When Speke and Grant were on their memorable journey from Zanzibar to the source of the Nile, they passed through the district of Ukuni, which lies to the south of the Victoria Nyanza. The king of the country lived at the village of Nunda and "owned three hundred milch cows, yet every day there was a difficulty about purchasing milk, and we were obliged to boil it that it might keep, for fear we should have none the following day. This practice the natives objected to, saying, 'The cows will stop their milk if you do so.'"[1] Similarly Speke tells us that he received milk from some Wahuma (Bahima) women whom he had treated for ophthalmia, but he adds, "The milk, however, I could not boil excepting in secrecy, else they would have stopped their donations on the plea that this process would be an incantation or bewitchment, from which their cattle would fall sick and dry up."[2] Among the Masai of East Africa, who are, or used to be, a purely pastoral tribe depending for their sustenance on their herds of cattle, to boil milk "is a heinous offence, and would be accounted a sufficient reason for massacring a caravan. It is believed that the cattle would cease to give milk."[3] Similarly the Baganda, of Central Africa, believed that to boil milk would cause the cow's milk to cease, and among them no one was ever permitted to boil milk except in a single case, which was this: "When the cow that had calved was milked again for the first time, the herdboy was given the milk and carried it to some place in the pasture, where according to custom he showed the cow and calf to his fellow-herdsmen. Then he slowly boiled the milk until

The Masai.

The Baganda.

[1] J. A. Grant, *A Walk across Africa* (Edinburgh and London, 1864), p. 89.

[2] J. H. Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (London, 1912), ch. vi. p. 138 (*Everyman's Library*).

[3] Joseph Thomson, *Through Masai Land* (London, 1885), p. 445. Compare "Dr. Fischer's Journey in the Masai Country," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, New Series, vi. (1884) p. 80; P. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika* (Leipsic, 1892), pp. 287 *sq.* However, milk mixed with blood and heated is given by them to the wounded. But this practice is said to have been borrowed from outside. See O. Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle* (Berlin, 1894), p. 162. Compare M. Merker, *Die Masai* (Berlin, 1904), p. 32, who says that among the Masai, while milk is always drunk unboiled, either fresh or sour, by persons in health, boiled milk, generally mixed with the powdered grains of *Maesa lanceolata*, is the diet of the sick.

it became a cake, when he and his companion partook of the milk cake together."[1] Among the Bahima or Banyankole, a pastoral tribe of Central Africa, both the rule and the exception are similar. "Milk must not be boiled for food, as the boiling would endanger the health of the herd and might cause some of the cows to die. For ceremonial use it is boiled when the umbilical cord falls from a calf, and the milk which has been sacred becomes common. Milk from any cow that has newly calved is taboo for several days, until the umbilical cord falls from the calf; during this time some member of the family is set apart to drink the milk, but he must then be careful to touch no milk from any other cow."[2] So, too, among the Thonga, a Bantu tribe of South-Eastern Africa, "the milk of the first week after a cow has calved is taboo. It must not be mixed with other cows' milk, because the umbilical cord of the calf has not yet fallen. It can, however, be boiled and consumed by children as they do not count! After that milk is never boiled: not that there is any taboo to fear, but it is not customary. Natives do not give any clear reason for these milk taboos."[3] It is possible that the Thonga have forgotten the original reasons for these customary restrictions on the use of milk; as their lands are situated on and near Delagoa Bay in Portuguese territory, the tribe has for centuries been in contact with Europeans and is naturally in a less primitive state than the tribes of Central Africa, which till about the middle of the nineteenth century lived absolutely secluded from all European influence. On the analogy, therefore, of those pastoral peoples who in their long seclusion have preserved their primitive ideas and customs with little change, we may safely conclude that with the Thonga also the original motive for refusing to boil milk was a fear of sympathetically injuring the cows from which the milk had been extracted.

The Bahima.

The Thonga.

To return to the Bahima of Central Africa, they even say that "if a European puts his milk into tea it will kill the

The objection to boil milk among the Bahima, Banyoro, Somali, etc.

[1] John Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), p. 418.

[2] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu* (Cambridge, 1915), p. 137.

[3] Henri A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (Neuchâtel, 1912–1913), ii. 51.

cow which gave the milk."[1] In this tribe "strange notions prevail as to the knowingness of cows as to the disposition of their milk; one gets quite used to being told by one's cow-herd such fables as that a certain cow refuses to be milked any more because you have been boiling the milk!"[2] This last statement probably implies a slight misunderstanding of native opinion on the subject; to judge by analogy, the flow of milk is supposed to cease, not because the cow will not yield it, but because she cannot, her udders being dried up by the heat of the fire over which her milk has been boiled. Among the Banyoro, again, another pastoral tribe of Central Africa, it is a rule that "no milk may be cooked nor may it be warmed by fire, because of the harm likely to happen to the herd."[3] Similarly among the Somali of East Africa "camel's milk is never heated, for fear of bewitching the animal."[4] The same prohibition to boil milk is observed, probably for the same reason, by the Southern Gallas of the same region,[5] the Nandi of British East Africa,[6] and the Wagogo, the Wamegi, and the Wahumba, three tribes of what till lately was German East Africa.[7] And among the tribes of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan "the majority of the Hadendoa will not cook milk, and in this the Artega and the Ashraf resemble them."[8]

Relics of a similar belief in a sympathetic relation

[1] Major J. A. Meldon, "Notes on the Bahima of Ankole," *Journal of the African Society*, No. 22 (January 1907), p. 142.

[2] Rev. A. L. Kitching, *On the Backwaters of the Nile* (London, 1912), p. 122.

[3] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 67.

[4] (Sir) Richard F. Burton, *First Footsteps in East Africa, or, an Exploration of Harar* (London, 1856), p. 155.

[5] C. G. Seligmann, "Some aspects of the Hamitic problem in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) p. 655.

[6] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), p. 24.

[7] This I learn from my friend the Rev. J. Roscoe, whose information is derived from personal contact with all three tribes.

[8] C. G. Seligmann, "Some aspects of the Hamitic problem in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) p. 655. However, the prohibition to boil milk is not universal among pastoral tribes. Thus among the Wataturu of East Africa, who used to live mainly on flesh and milk, the practice of boiling milk was always quite common. See O. Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle* (Berlin, 1894), p. 171. And the modern Bedouins of Arabia and Moab seem to boil milk without scruple. See J. L. Burckhardt, *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahábys* (London, 1831), i. 63; C. M. Doughty, *Arabia Deserta* (Cambridge, 1888), ii. 67; Antonin Jaussen, *Les Arabes au pays de Moab* (Paris, 1908), p. 68.

between a cow and the milk that has been drawn from, her are reported to exist among some of the more backward peoples of Europe down to the present time. Among the Esthonians, when the first fresh milk of a cow after calving is to be boiled, a silver ring and a small saucer are laid under the kettle before the milk is poured into it. This is done "in order that the cow's udder may remain healthy, and that the milk may not be bad." Further, the Esthonians believe that "if, in boiling, the milk boils over into the fire, the cow's dugs will be diseased."[1] Bulgarian peasants in like manner think that "when the milk, in boiling, runs over into the fire, the cow's supply of milk is diminished and may even cease entirely."[2] In these latter cases, though no scruple seems to be felt about boiling milk, there is a strong objection to burning it by letting it fall into the fire, because the burning of the milk is supposed to harm the cow from which the milk was extracted, either by injuring her dugs or by checking the flow of her milk. We have seen that the Moors of Morocco entertain precisely similar notions as to the harmful effect of letting the milk in a pot boil over into the fire.[3] We need not suppose that the superstition has spread from Morocco through Bulgaria to Esthonia, or in the reverse direction from Esthonia through Bulgaria to Morocco. In all three regions the belief may have originated independently in those elementary laws of the association of ideas which are common to all human minds, and which lie at the foundation of sympathetic magic.[4] A like train of thought may explain the Eskimo rule that no water should be boiled inside a house during the salmon fishery, because "it is bad for the fishery."[5] We may conjecture, though we are not told, that the boiling of the water in the house at such a time is supposed sympathetically to injure or frighten the salmon in the river and so to spoil the catch.

Traces of a similar belief in the sympathetic relation between a cow and her milk among European peoples.

[1] F. J. Wiedemann, *Aus dem inneren und äusseren Leben der Ehsten* (St. Petersburg, 1876), p. 480.

[2] Dr. G. Kazarow, in a letter to me written in German and dated Sofia, Bulgaria, 2nd December 1907.

[3] Above, p. 118.

[4] On the relation of sympathetic magic to the laws of the association of ideas, see *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, i. 52 *sqq.* (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part i.).

[5] W. H. Dall, "Social Life among the Aborigines," *The American Naturalist*, xii. (1878) p. 4.

The Hebrew command not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk may be based on a belief in the sympathetic relation of a she-goat to its milk and its kid.

A similar fear of tampering with the principal source of subsistence may well have dictated the old Hebrew commandment, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk." On this theory an objection will be felt to seething or boiling a kid in any milk, because the she-goat from which the milk had been drawn would be injured by the process, whether she was the dam of the boiled kid or not. The reason why the mother's milk is specially mentioned may have been either because as a matter of convenience the mother's milk was more likely to be used than any other for that purpose, or because the injury to the she-goat in such a case was deemed to be even more certain than in any other. For being linked to the boiling pot by a double bond of sympathy, since the kid, as well as the milk, had come from her bowels, the mother goat was twice as likely as any other goat to lose her milk or to be killed outright by the heat and ebullition.

The practice of boiling flesh in milk supposed by the Baganda to be injurious to the cows.

But it may be asked, "If the objection was simply to the boiling of milk, why is the kid mentioned at all in the commandment?" The practice, if not the theory, of the Baganda seems to supply the answer. Among these people it is recognized that flesh boiled in milk is a great dainty, and naughty boys and other unprincipled persons, who think more of their own pleasure than of the welfare of the herds, will gratify their sinful lusts, whenever they can do so on the sly,[1] heedless of the sufferings which their illicit banquet inflicts on the poor cows and goats. Thus the Hebrew commandment, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk," may have been directed against miscreants of this sort, whose surreptitious joys were condemned by public opinion as striking a fatal blow at the staple food of the community. We can therefore understand why in the eyes of a primitive pastoral people the boiling of milk should seem a blacker crime than robbery and murder. For whereas robbery and murder harm only individuals, the boiling of milk, like the poisoning of wells, seems to threaten the existence of the

[1] So I was privately informed some eleven years ago by my friend the Rev. J. Roscoe. Compare his book, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), p. 419, "Boys sometimes boiled milk on the sly, and even cooked meat in it, but this practice was considered to be fraught with serious danger to the cows."

whole tribe by cutting off its principal source of nourishment. That may be why in the first edition of the Hebrew Decalogue we miss the commandments, "Thou shalt not steal" and "Thou shalt do no murder," and find instead the commandment, "Thou shalt not boil milk."

Other rules observed by pastoral peoples may be explained by the sympathetic bond supposed to exist between an animal and its milk.

The conception of a sympathetic bond between an animal and the milk that has been drawn from it, appears to explain certain other rules observed by pastoral peoples, for some of which no sufficient explanation has yet been suggested. Thus milk is the staple food of the Damaras or Herero of South-West Africa, but they never cleanse the milk-vessels out of which they drink or eat, because they firmly believe that, were they to wash out the vessels, the cows would cease to give milk.[1] Apparently their notion is that to wash out the sediment of the milk from the pot would be to wash out the dregs of the milk from the cow's udders. With the Masai it is a rule that "the milk must be drawn into calabashes specially reserved for its reception, into which water is not allowed to enter—cleanliness being ensured by wood-ashes."[2] But though the Masai will not wash their milk-vessels with water, they regularly wash them with the urine of cows. As a reason for preferring that liquid for the purpose the women, whose duty it is to cleanse the vessels, allege curiously enough that the use of water would give a bad smell to the vessels, and would prevent the milk from curdling so uniformly as it does through an application of cows' urine.[3] While this is the reason they put forward to strangers for what to

The prohibition to wash out milk-vessels with water.

[1] (Sir) Francis Galton, *Narrative of an Explorer in Tropical South Africa*, Third Edition (London, 1890), p. 85; C. J. Andersson, *Lake Ngami*, Second Edition (London, 1856), p. 230; J. Hahn, "Die Ovaherero," *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, iv. (1869) p. 250. A similar superstition perhaps formerly prevailed in Scotland; at least in that country it used to be thought unlucky to wash out the churns. See Henry Grey Graham, *The Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1909), pp. 179, 215 note [4].

[2] Joseph Thomson, *Through Masai Land* (London, 1885), p. 445.

[3] M. Merker, *Die Masai* (Berlin, 1904), p. 37. To correct the pungent smell of the vessels so cleansed, the Masai perfume them or fumigate them with scented twigs. Compare S. L. Hinde and H. Hinde, *The Last of the Masai* (London, 1901), p. 58 note, "Handfuls of burning grass are employed to clean these gourds. . . . A certain liquid concoction of herbs is also employed for the cleansing of milk and cooking vessels." This "certain liquid concoction" is probably what Captain Merker more bluntly calls cows' urine.

Europeans must appear a disgusting habit, the true one may possibly be that the urine which emanates from a cow's body is less apt to injure her sympathetically than a foreign substance like water. The train of reasoning will not bear a rigorous examination, but neither does any part of the vast system of sympathetic magic which has entangled in its meshes, at one time or another, the greater part of the human race.

Abstinence of the pastoral Bahima from washing themselves with water.

As the pastoral Hereros refrain from washing the milk-vessels with water out of regard for their cows, so the pastoral Bahima abstain for a similar reason from washing themselves. "Neither men nor women wash, as it is considered to be detrimental to the cattle. They therefore use a dry bath for cleansing the skin, smearing butter and a kind of red earth over the body instead of water, and, after drying the skin, they rub butter well into the flesh." Water applied by a man to his own body "is said to injure his cattle and also his family."[1] The train of thought is here still more obscure than in the reluctance to apply water to milk-vessels; for how can the application of water to a man's person be supposed to injure his cows? Here again the substitution of butter for water as an abstergent suggests that, as in the substitution of cow's urine for water in cleansing the milk-vessels, the use of a substance which emanates from the cow is somehow conceived to be less fraught with danger to the animal's sensitive organism than the use of an alien substance. Whatever be the explanation, the Bahima clearly assume that between a man and his cattle there exists a relation of sympathy so close that an action which to us might seem purely self-regarding, such as washing his body, directly affects the animals. In other words, a bond of sympathetic magic, like that which is certainly believed to exist between a cow and her milk even after she has parted with it, is apparently supposed to exist also between a cow, her master, and his family; for Bahima women as well as men are discouraged from indulging in ablutions which might prove detrimental to the herd.

Moreover, some pastoral tribes believe their cattle to be sympathetically affected, not only by the nature of the sub-

[1] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, pp. 103 *sq.*, 137.

stance which is employed to clean the milk-vessels, but also by the material of which the vessels are made. Thus among the Bahima "no vessel of iron is allowed to be used for milk, only wooden bowls, gourds, or earthen pots. The use of other kinds of vessels would be injurious, they believe, to the cattle and might possibly cause the cows to fall ill." [1] So among the Banyoro the milk-vessels are almost all of wood or gourds, though a few earthen pots may be found in a kraal for holding milk. "No metal vessels are used; pastoral peoples do not allow such vessels to have milk poured into them lest the cows should suffer." [2] Similarly among the Baganda "most milk-vessels were made of pottery, a few only being made of wood; the people objected to tin or iron vessels, because the use of them would be harmful to the cows"; [3] and among the Nandi "the only vessels that may be used for milk are the gourds or calabashes. If anything else were employed, it is believed that it would be injurious to the cattle." [4] The Akikuyu often think "that to milk an animal into any vessel other than the usual half calabash, *e.g.* into a European white enamelled bowl, is likely to make it go off its milk." [5] Strict rules as to the proper materials for milk-vessels appear to be observed also by the tribes of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. On this subject Dr. C. G. Seligmann writes, "None of the Beja tribes with whom I am acquainted milk into a clay vessel or put milk into one of these, in spite of the fact that many of the Hadendoa make pots. Nor would it be permissible to milk into one of the modern tin bowls which Europeans have recently introduced into the country. Gourds and basket vessels, especially the latter, are considered the appropriate receptacles for milk, though skin vessels, *girba*, may be used." [6] The motive for thus limiting the materials which may be used in the making of milk-vessels is not mentioned by Dr. Seligmann, but it probably

The cows thought to be affected by the material of which milk-vessels are made.

[1] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu* (Cambridge, 1915), p. 106.

[2] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, pp. 65, 66.

[3] John Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), p. 419.

[4] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), p. 21.

[5] W. Scoresby Routledge and Katherine Routledge, *With a Prehistoric People* (London, 1910), p. 46.

[6] C. G. Seligmann, "Some aspects of the Hamitic problem in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) p. 654.

is, or was originally, a fear that the employment of certain materials might be injurious to the cattle. In general the materials preferred for this purpose would naturally be those with which the people had been familiar from time immemorial, while on the contrary the materials condemned as unsuitable would be those with which they had only in recent times made acquaintance. The conservative savage is a slave to custom, and tends to look upon every innovation with deep and superstitious distrust.

Menstruous women not allowed to drink milk lest the cows should be injured thereby.

Again it is a rule with many cattle-keeping tribes of Africa that milk may not be drunk by women during menstruation, and in every case the motive for the prohibition appears to be a fear lest, by virtue of sympathetic magic, the women should exert a baneful influence on the cows from which the milk was extracted. Thus with regard to the tribes of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan we are told that "no menstruous woman drinks milk lest the animal from which it was drawn should suffer, and the Bedawib say that any infringement of this rule would render sterile both the woman and the animal from which the milk was taken; nor may a menstruous woman drink *semn* (butter)."[1] Among the Banyoro of Central Africa "during menstruation the wives of wealthy cattle owners were given milk to drink from old cows which were not expected to have calves again; wives of men with only a limited number of cows were prohibited from drinking milk at all and had to live on vegetable food during the time of their indisposition, because their condition was considered harmful to the cows, should they drink milk. After living on a vegetable diet a woman fasted at least twelve hours before she ventured to drink milk again." Moreover, all the time of her monthly period a woman took care not to touch any milk-vessels.[2] The milk of the old cow, on which a rich woman at such seasons was allowed to subsist, had to be kept separate from the common stock of milk and reserved for the patient alone.[3]

[1] C. G. Seligmann, "Some aspects of the Hamitic problem in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) p. 655. Among the tribes which observe the prohibition are the Dinkas of the White Nile (*op. cit.* p. 656).

[2] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 42.

[3] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 67.

Among the Bahima of the same region the customs are similar. A menstruous woman may neither drink milk nor handle the milk-vessels; she eats vegetables and drinks beer all the time of her sickness, unless her husband happens to be a rich man, who may give her the milk of an old cow that is past the age of bearing. "Should a woman continue to drink milk during her indisposition it is thought she would injure the cows, especially their generative powers."[1] So, too, at a Bahima girl's first menstruation her father provides her with milk from an old cow, and she may not drink the milk of other cows or handle any milk-vessels for fear of thereby harming the cattle.[2] The condition attached by the Banyoro and Bahima to the drinking of milk by menstruous women is significant; the cow from which the milk is drawn must be past the age of bearing a calf, and as she will soon lose her milk in any case, it does not matter much if she loses it a little sooner through the pollution of her milk by the menstruous woman. Among the Baganda, also, no menstruous woman might come into contact with any milk-vessel or drink milk till she had recovered from her sickness.[3] Though the reason for the prohibition is not mentioned, we may safely assume that it was the same belief in the noxious influence which women at such times are thought to exercise on milch cows.

Among the Kafir tribes of South Africa in like manner milk is forbidden to women at menstruation; should they drink it the people believe that the cattle would die.[4] Not only a Kafir girl at her first menstruation but the maidens who wait on her are forbidden to drink milk, lest the cattle should die;

Menstruous women not allowed to drink milk or approach the cattle among the Kafirs of South Africa.

[1] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, pp. 109, 122.

[2] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 126.

[3] John Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 419.

[4] Rev. J. Macdonald, "Manners, Customs, Superstitions, and Religions of South African Tribes," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xx. (1891) p. 138; *id.*, *Light in Africa*, Second Edition (London, 1890), p. 221. Compare L. Alberti, *De Kaffers aan de Zuidkust van Afrika* (Amsterdam, 1810), pp. 102 *sq.*; Col. Maclean, *Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs* (Cape Town, 1866), pp. 91, 122. These latter writers mention the prohibition without giving the reason. It is for a like reason, probably, that among the Bacas of South Africa a woman at menstruation is not allowed to see or touch cow's dung (Rev. J. Macdonald, in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xx. (1891) p. 119).

the period of seclusion and taboo to which the damsels must submit on this occasion may last from one to two weeks.[1] Among the Thonga, about Delagoa Bay, not only is a menstruous woman forbidden to drink the milk of cows, she may not even approach the cattle kraal or look at the animals.[2] If a Kafir woman infringes the rule by drinking milk during her monthly period, her husband may be fined from one to three head of cattle, which are paid to the chief. Formerly this time of abstinence from milk lasted for seven or eight days a month.[3] Further, among the Kafirs menstruous women are forbidden to cross those parts of the kraal which are frequented by the cattle; for if a drop of their blood were to fall on the path, "any oxen passing over it would run great risk of dying from disease." Hence women have to make circuitous paths from one hut to another, going round the back of the huts in order to avoid the forbidden ground. The tracks which they use may be seen at every kraal. But there is no such restriction on the walks of women who are past child-bearing, because they have ceased to be a source of danger.[4] Among the Kaniyans of Cochin, in Southern India, a woman at menstruation may neither drink milk nor milk a cow.[5]

Superstitious fear of tainting cows' milk with blood.

The disabilities thus imposed on women at menstruation are perhaps dictated by a fear lest the cows whose milk they drink should yield milk mingled with blood. Such a fear, Mr. Roscoe tells me, is much felt by the pastoral tribes of Central Africa. In some parts of Europe peasants resort to superstitious remedies when the milk of their cows is

[1] L. Alberti, *De Kaffers aan de Zuidkust van Afrika* (Amsterdam, 1910), pp. 78 *sq.*; H. Lichtenstein, *Reisen im südlichen Africa* (Berlin, 1811–1812), i. 428; George Thompson, *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa* (London, 1827), ii. 354; Mr. Warner's Notes, in Col. Maclean's *Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs* (Cape Town, 1866), p. 98; G. M'Call Theal, *Kaffir Folk-lore* (London, 1886), p. 218; Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), p. 209. Only the last of these writers mentions the reason for the custom.

[2] Henri A. Junod, "Les conceptions physiologiques des Bantou Sud-Africains et leurs tabous," *Revue d'Ethnographie et de Sociologie*, i. (1910) p. 139. Compare *id.*, *Life of a South African Tribe* (Neuchâtel, 1912–1913), ii. 51.

[3] Mr. Brownlee's Notes, in Col. Maclean's *Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs* (Cape Town, 1866), p. 122.

[4] Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir*, pp. 238 *sq.*; Mr. Warner's Notes, in Col. Maclean's *Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs* (Cape Town, 1866), p. 93.

[5] L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes* (Madras, 1909–1912), i. 203.

similarly polluted. In the Mark of Brandenburg the cure is, or was, to milk the cow through a natural hole in a piece of oak-wood.[1] In Masuren a "thunderbolt," that is, a prehistoric flint implement, is used instead of a piece of oak-wood for this purpose; or the bloody milk is poured into a potsherd and set on a fence, where it stays till a swallow flies over it, which is thought to restore the purity of the milk.[2] The same fear of infecting cows' milk with blood may explain the Zulu custom which forbids a wounded man to drink milk until he has performed a certain ceremony. Thus when an Englishman, serving with the Zulus, was wounded in action and bled profusely, a young heifer was killed by order of the medicine-man, and its small entrails, mixed with the gall and some roots, were parboiled and given to the sufferer to drink. At first he refused the nauseous dose, but the medicine-man flew into a passion and said "that unless I drank of the mixture, I could not be permitted to take milk, fearing the cows might die, and if I approached the king I should make him ill." Further, the sufferer was forced to swallow an emetic, consisting of a decoction of roots, for the purpose of clearing his stomach.[3] Similarly among the Nandi of British East Africa persons who have been wounded or are suffering from boils or ulcers may not drink fresh milk,[4] probably from a like regard for the welfare of the herd. This fear of injuring the cows through the infection of blood may perhaps explain a Bechuana custom of removing all wounded persons to a distance from their towns and villages.[5]

Wounded men not allowed to drink milk.

Women in childbed and for some time after it are believed by many savages to be a source of dangerous infection, on which account it is customary to isolate them like lepers from the rest of the community.[6] Hence it is not surprising to find that among the Thonga a woman may not drink any

Women in childbed not allowed to drink milk.

[1] Adalbert Kuhn, *Märkische Sagen und Märchen* (Berlin, 1843), p. 379.

[2] M. Toeppen, *Aberglauben aus Masuren*[2] (Danzig, 1867), p. 100.

[3] Nathaniel Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* (London, 1836), i. 203-205. Compare Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), pp. 309 *sq.*

[4] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), p. 24 note [1].

[5] Robert Moffat, *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa* (London, 1842), p. 465. Dr. Moffat could not ascertain the reason of the custom.

[6] *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, pp. 147 *sqq.* (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part ii.).

milk from the birth of her child till the infant has been formally presented to the moon, which takes place usually in the third month after her delivery. Afterwards she is allowed to drink only the milk of cows which have calved many times.[1] Among the Banyoro "a woman at childbirth may drink milk, but, if the child is a boy, she is given the milk from a cow that has lost her calf; whereas, if the child is a girl, she is free to drink the milk from any cow."[2] The restriction thus imposed on a woman who has given birth to a male child points to a fear that she might injure ordinary cows if she were suffered to drink their milk. The same fear is apparently entertained in a high degree by the Nandi, whenever a woman has given birth to twins. For among them "the birth of twins is looked upon as an inauspicious event, and the mother is considered unclean for the rest of her life. She is given her own cow and may not touch the milk or blood of any other animal. She may enter nobody's house until she has sprinkled a calabash full of water on the ground, and she may never cross the threshold of a cattle kraal again."[3] If a mother of twins even approaches the cattle-pen, the Nandi believe that the animals will die.[4] The Suk, another tribe of British East Africa, seem to entertain a like dread of pregnant women, for among them a woman during her pregnancy lives on the milk of a cow set apart for her use. The animal must never have suffered from any sickness, and no one else may drink its milk at the same time.[5] Banyoro herdsmen believe that the entrance of a nursing mother into their houses or kraals is in some way harmful to the cows, though in what the harm is supposed to consist has not been ascertained.[6] Perhaps the notion may be that the milk in the woman's breasts is so much milk abstracted from the udders of the cows. If that is so, it might explain why a nursing mother is the totem of several Banyoro clans, and why in such clans no woman who is nursing a child may enter a kraal or a

Milk of particular cows reserved for mothers of twins and pregnant women.

[1] Henri A. Junod, *Life of a South African Tribe*, i. 51, 190, ii. 51.

[2] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 67, compare p. 44.

[3] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), p. 68.

[4] C. W. Hobley, *Eastern Uganda* (London, 1902), pp. 39 *sq.*

[5] Mervyn W. H. Beech, *The Suk, their Language and Folklore* (Oxford, 1911), p. 22.

[6] *Totemism and Exogamy*, ii. 521 note [3], from information supplied by the Rev. John Roscoe.

house.[1] The explanation of the curious taboo may be that a woman in these circumstances is conceived to draw away, by sympathetic magic, the milk from the bodies of the animals into her own.

Women not allowed to milk cows in many African tribes.

The same dread which the natural functions of woman inspire in the breast of the ignorant and superstitious savage probably lies at the root of the stringent rule which among many African tribes, especially of the Bantu family, forbids women to milk or herd the cows and to enter the cattle-yard.[2] For example, in regard to the Kafir tribes of South Africa we are told that "the care of the cattle and dairy is the highest post of honor amongst them, and this is always allotted to the men. They milk the cows; herd the oxen; and keep the *kraals* or cattle yards. The women are never (under the pain of heavy chastisement) permitted to touch a beast: even the young calves and heifers are tended by the lads and boys, and should a woman or girl be found in or near the cattle, she is severely beaten. A curious custom prevails amongst them in connection with this usage. If a

[1] *Totemism and Exogamy*, ii. 516 *sqq.*, 521; John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, pp. 28 *sqq.*

[2] Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir*, pp. 59, 238; John Campbell, *Travels in South Africa, Second Journey* (London, 1822), ii. 213; E. Casalis, *The Basutos* (London, 1861), p. 125; Rev. Francis Fleming, *Kaffraria, and its Inhabitants* (London, 1853), pp. 98 *sq.*; A. Kranz, *Natur- und Kulturleben der Zulus* (Wiesbaden, 1880), pp. 81 *sq.*; James Macdonald, *Light in Africa*, Second Edition (London, 1890), p. 221; F. Lichtenstein, *Reisen im Südlichen Afrika* (Berlin, 1811–1812), i. 441; H. Schinz, *Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika* (Oldenburg and Leipsic, N.D.), p. 296; L. Grout, *Zululand* (Philadelphia, N.D.), p. 111; John Mackenzie, *Ten Years North of the Orange River* (Edinburgh, 1871), p. 499; G. Fritsche, *Die Eingeborenen Süd-Afrikas* (Breslau, 1872), pp. 85, 183; Sir H. H. Johnston, *British Central Africa* (London, 1897), p. 431; C. Gouldsbury and H. Sheane, *The Great Plateau of Northern Rhodesia* (London, 1911), p. 305; H. Cole, "Notes on the Wagogo of German East Afrika," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii. (1902) p. 337; C. T. Wilson and R. W. Felkin, *Uganda and the Egyptian Soudan* (London, 1882), i. 164; R. W. Felkin, "Notes on the Madi or Moru tribe of Central Africa," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, xii. (1882–1884) pp. 306 *sq.*: Robert P. Ashe, *Two Kings of Uganda* (London, 1889), p. 340; John Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 416; *id.*, *The Northern Bantu*, pp. 66, 107 *sq.*, 118, 236, 290; *Emin Pasha in Central Africa* (London, 1888), pp. 88, 149, 238, 343; W. Munzinger, *Sitten und Recht der Bogos* (Winterthur, 1859), pp. 77 *sq.*; *id.*, *Ostafrikanische Studien* (Schaffhausen, 1864), p. 325; Diedrich Westermann, *The Shilluk People, their Language and Folklore* (Philadelphia, 1912), p. xxix; C. G. Seligmann, "Some aspects of the Hamitic problem in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) p. 655. However, it deserves to be noticed that among the Bechuanas, while cows are always milked by men, goats are always milked by women (J. Campbell, *loc. cit.*).

woman has necessity to enter a cattle *kraal*, she is obliged, if married, to bring her husband with her, or nearest male relative, if not, to the gate of the enclosure. He then lays his assegai on the ground, the point being inside the entrance, and the woman walks in on the handle of the weapon. This is considered as a passport of entrance, and saves her from punishment: but, even in this case, strict inquiry is made as to the necessity for such an entrance, nor are the men very willing to grant, too frequently, such an indulgence to them."[1]

Women not allowed to milk cattle among the Todas of Southern India.

Amongst the Todas, a pastoral tribe of the Neilgherry Hills in Southern India, the business of milking the cattle is performed by men only, who are invested, according to their rank, with various degrees of sanctity, and have to observe strict rules of ceremonial purity. Toda women take no part in the ritual of the sacred dairy nor in the operations of milking and churning which are there carried on. They may go to the dairy to fetch butter-milk, but they must approach it by an appointed path and stand at an appointed place to receive the milk. Only under very special conditions is a woman or girl permitted to enter a dairy. Indeed during the performance of certain ceremonies at the dairy women are obliged to leave the village altogether.[2] Among the Badagas, another tribe of the Neilgherry Hills, if a family has cows or buffaloes yielding milk, a portion of the inner apartment of the dwelling is converted into a milk-house, in which milk is stored, and which no woman may enter. Even males who are polluted, by having touched or passed near persons of an inferior caste, may not enter the milk-house till they have purified themselves by a ceremonial bath.[3]

However, this sedulous seclusion of women from cattle is not practised by all cattle-breeding tribes. For example,

[1] Rev. Francis Fleming, *Southern Africa* (London, 1856), pp. 214 *sq.*

[2] W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas* (London, 1906), pp. 56 *sqq.*, 83 *sqq.*, 231 *sqq.*, especially 245 *sq.* Speaking of one of the sacred dairies of the Todas, which he rightly enough calls a temple, Captain Harkness says, "Their women are not allowed to enter this temple, nor are the men at all times; but only when they are in that state which is considered to be pure. The boys of the family, however, have free ingress and egress, and much of the business of the dairy is performed by them" (Henry Harkness, *Description of a Singular Aboriginal Race inhabiting the Neilgherry Hills*, London, 1832, p. 24). The exception in favour of boys, presumably under puberty, is significant.

[3] Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), i. 75.

the cows are milked by women among the Hottentots, Korannas, and Herero of South Africa;[1] among the Masai,[2] Akamba,[3] and Turkana[4] of East Africa; and among the Fulahs of West Africa.[5] So far indeed are the Namaquas, a Hottentot tribe, from sharing the superstition as to the disastrous influence of menstruous women on milk and cattle that among them, when a girl attains to puberty, she is led round the village to touch the milk-vessels in the houses and the rams in the folds for good luck.[6] With this custom we may compare a practice of the Herero. Among them the fresh milk of the cows is brought by the women to the chief or owner of the kraal, at the sacred hearth or sacrificial altar, and he tastes and thereby hallows the milk before it may be converted into curds. But if there happens to be a lying-in woman in the kraal, all the fresh milk is taken to her, and she consecrates it in like manner instead of the chief.[7] Among the Suk of British East Africa cows are milked by women, children, and uncircumcised boys.[8] Among the Nandi, another tribe of British East Africa, the milking of the cows is usually done by boys and girls.[9] Among the Dinka of the White Nile "cows should be milked by boys and girls before puberty; in case of necessity a man might milk a cow, but this is not a desirable practice, nor should old men do so even when they are past sexual relations."[10] Perhaps, however, the rule

Women allowed to milk cows in some tribes of Africa and Asia.

[1] Peter Kolben, *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope* (London, 1738), i. 171, 172; Theophilus Hahn, *Tsuni-||Goam, the Supreme Being of the Khoi-Khoi* (London, 1881), p. 20; John Mackenzie, *Ten Years North of the Orange River* (Edinburgh, 1871), p. 499; J. Irle, *Die Herero* (Gütersloh, 1906), p. 121. Among the Hottentots the milk of cows is drunk by both sexes, but the milk of ewes only by women (P. Kolben, *op. cit.* i. 175).

[2] S. L. Hinde and H. Hinde, *The Last of the Masai* (London, 1901), p. 81; A. C. Hollis, *The Masai* (Oxford, 1905), p. 290. But while women milk the cows, young boys milk the goats (S. L. Hinde and H. Hinde, *l.c.*).

[3] Hon. Charles Dundas, "History of Kitui," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) p. 502.

[4] Mervyn W. H. Beech, *The Suk, their Language and Folklore* (Oxford, 1911), p. 33.

[5] Louis Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan* (Paris, 1912), p. 623.

[6] Sir J. E. Alexander, *Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa* (London, 1838), i. 169.

[7] Rev. E. Dannert, "Customs of the Ovaherero at the birth of a Child," (*South African*) *Folk-lore Journal*, ii. 63 *sq.*; J. Irle, *Die Herero* (Gütersloh, 1906), pp. 79, 94.

[8] Mervyn W. H. Beech, *The Suk, their Language and Folklore* (Oxford, 1911), p. 9.

[9] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), p. 21.

[10] C. G. Seligmann, "Some aspects of the Hamitic problem in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) p. 656.

varies somewhat in this tribe; for according to Emin Pasha "the Dinka are the only negroes in our province among whom women are allowed to milk the cows."[1] Among the Bagesu, an agricultural tribe of British East Africa, who keep some cattle, cows are milked either by men or by women; for women are under no restrictions in dealing with the animals.[2] Among the Bedouins of Arabia the milch camels are milked by men and lads only, but the sheep and goats are milked by women.[3] Among the Arabs of Moab also it is the women who usually milk the sheep and the goats.[4] Among the Kalmuks and Khirgiz of Siberia it is the business of the women to milk the cattle,[5] and among the Lapps the reindeer are milked by men and women indifferently.[6]

The pollution of death a bar to the drinking of milk. Mourners forbidden to drink milk in some African tribes.

The pollution of death is also with some people a bar to the drinking of milk. Thus, in the Rowadjeh and Djaafere tribes of Arabs, near Esne in Egypt, "if any person of the family die, the women stain their hands and feet blue with indigo; which demonstration of their grief they suffer to remain for eight days, all that time abstaining from milk, and not allowing any vessel containing it to be brought into the house; for they say that the whiteness of the milk but ill accords with the sable gloom of their minds."[7] Among the Dinka the near relatives of a dead man may not touch milk during the first few days after the death, that is, during the time that they sleep near the grave.[8] With the Banyoro of Central Africa mourning lasted from

[1] *Emin Pasha in Central Africa, being a Collection of his Letters and Journals* (London, 1888), p. 343. Elsewhere, referring to the Latuka, another tribe of the Egyptian Sudan, the same writer observes (p. 238), "Cattle are only milked by men; the dirty habit practised by the Dinka, Bari, and others, of washing the milker's hands and face, as also the cow's udder and the milk-pot, with urine does not exist here."

[2] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 168.

[3] C. M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (Cambridge, 1888), i. 261 *sq.*; J. L. Burckhardt, *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahábys* (London, 1831), i. 239.

[4] Antonin Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab* (Paris, 1908), pp. 67 *sq.*

[5] P. S. Pallas, *Reise durch verschiedene Provinzen des Russischen Reichs* (St. Petersburg, 1771–1776), i. 314; Arved v. Schultz, "Volks- und wirtschaftliche Studien im Pamir," *Petermanns Mitteilungen*, lvi. (Gotha, 1910) Halbband i., p. 252.

[6] J. Scheffer, *Lapponia* (Frankfort, 1673), p. 331.

[7] J. L. Burckhardt, *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahábys* (London, 1831), i. 280 *sq.*

[8] C. G. Seligmann, "Some aspects of the Hamitic problem in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) p. 656.

two to six months, and all that time the mourners were forbidden to drink milk, the relatives and friends of the deceased meanwhile providing them with oxen to eat and beer to drink.[1] Some of the tribes of British East Africa expose their dead to be devoured by hyenas, and among them the persons who have handled the corpse and carried it out to its last resting-place, there to await the wild beasts, are subject to various taboos; in particular they are forbidden to drink milk. For example, among the Nandi the men who have discharged this office bathe in a river, anoint their bodies with fat, partially shave their heads, and live in the hut of the deceased for four days, during which time they may not be seen by a boy or a female. Further, they may not touch food with their hands, but must eat with the help of a potsherd or chip of a gourd, and they may not drink milk.[2] Among the Akikuyu of the same region the relative who has exposed a corpse returns to the house of the deceased, but he may not enter the village by the gate; he must break a way for himself through the village fence. The reason for this singular mode of entrance is not mentioned, but we may conjecture that the motive for adopting it is a wish to throw the ghost off the scent, who might pursue his relative back to the house through the familiar gateway, but is brought short up at the hole in the fence. Having reached the house, the man who has discharged the last duty to the dead must live alone in it for eight days. Food is set down for him by his kinsfolk in front of the door. It consists exclusively of vegetables, for flesh and especially milk he is forbidden to partake of. When eight days have passed, an old woman comes and shaves the hair of his head, for which service she receives a goat. After that he breaks out through the village fence, probably with the fear of the ghost still before his eyes or behind his back, and betakes himself to the elders and medicine-men, who are assembled outside of the village. They sacrifice a goat and besmear him from head to foot with the contents of the animal's stomach. A medicine-man gives him a particular beverage to drink, and having quaffed it the man is clean once more; he may now enter

The custom among the Akikuyu.

[1] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 59.

[2] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), p. 70.

the village in the usual way by the gate, and he is again free to drink milk.[1] When a death has taken place in a Zulu village, no milk is drunk nor are the cattle allowed to be milked on that day.[2] And with regard to the Kafirs of South Africa in general we are told that after a death "the people in the kraal are all unclean. They may not drink milk, nor may they transact any business with other kraals, until the doctor has cleansed them. Those who touched the dead body are specially unclean, and so is every implement which was used to make the grave with, or the dead body touched. Those who touched the dead body, or the dead man's things, have to wash in running water. A doctor is called in, and he offers a sacrifice to cleanse the cows, the milk, and the people; yet for several months the people are not allowed to sell any oxen. The doctor takes some medicine and mixes it with milk, making all the people drink the decoction; this is done at a spot far away from the kraal."[3] An earlier authority on the Kafirs of South Africa tells us that with them no person ceremonially unclean may drink milk, and that among such persons are a widow and a widower, the widow being unclean for a month and the widower for half a month after the death of husband or wife respectively.[4] Similarly among the Todas of Southern India, who are a purely pastoral people, a widower and a widow are forbidden to drink milk for a period which may extend for many months.[5] In the Konkan, a province of the Bombay Presidency, the use of milk is prohibited during the period of mourning.[6]

Among the Zulus and Kafirs milk is not drunk in a village after a death until a ceremony of purification has been performed.

Milk forbidden to mourners in some parts of India.

No satisfactory motive is assigned for the common prohibition thus laid on mourners to partake of milk; for the reason alleged by Arab women in Egypt, that the whiteness

The prohibition of milk to mourners probably due to a fear of killing the cows.

[1] J. M. Hildebrandt, "Ethnographische Notizen über Wakamba und ihre Nachbarn," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, x. (1878) pp. 404 *sq.*

[2] A. F. Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country in South Africa* (London, 1836), p. 81.

[3] Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), p. 249, compare p. 246. Compare Stephen Kay, *Travels and Researches in Caffraria* (London, 1833), p. 199, "When death has occurred in a village, all its inhabitants fast, abstaining even from a draught of milk the whole of that day, and sometimes longer."

[4] L. Alberti, *De Kaffers aan de Zuidkust van Afrika* (Amsterdam, 1810), pp. 102 *sq.*

[5] W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas* (London, 1906), p. 241.

[6] R. E. Enthoven, "Folklore of the Konkan," *The Indian Antiquary*, xliv. (1915) *Supplement*, p. 69.

of the milk would not comport with the blackness of their sorrow, is clearly a fanciful afterthought. In the light of the evidence which has come before us, we may conjecture that in all cases the original motive was a fear lest the cows might die, if their milk were drunk by a man or woman who was thus deeply tainted with the pollution and infection of death. Yet in apparent contradiction with this fear is the treatment of a widow among the Bechuanas. "When a woman's husband is dead, she may not enter a town, unless she has been under the hands of a sorcerer. She must remain at some distance from the town; then a little milk from every cow is taken to her, which mixture of milk she must boil with her food. Dung from the cattle pens is also taken to her, and with this, mixed with some *molemo*, she must rub herself. If this ceremony be not gone through, it is thought that all the cattle in the town will surely die."[1] How these ceremonies prevent the cattle from dying is not clear to the untutored mind of the European; but at least we can see that the milk and dung are both believed to remain in sympathetic connexion with the animals, since the use of them by the widow is supposed to save the herd alive. Perhaps an essential part of the ceremonies is the boiling of the milk before it is drunk by the widow; for we have seen that, while the boiling of milk is generally forbidden by pastoral tribes, it is allowed and even enjoined by them in the particular case of biestings, that is, the first milk drawn from a cow after casting her calf.[2] Another instance of this remarkable treatment of biestings is furnished by the Bagesu of British East Africa. Among them, "when a cow calves, the calf has the milk on the first day; on the second day the cow is milked and the milk is slowly boiled until it forms a cake, and the owner of the cow with his wife and a few relatives eat this cake. The day after this ceremony the cow is milked at the ordinary milking-times, and the milk is added to the common supply."[3] Probably the boiling and eating of the milk in this case is supposed somehow to

Bechuana custom of giving boiled milk from many cows to a widow to drink.

Custom of boiling a cow's first milk in certain special cases.

[1] Miss J. P. Meeuwsen, "Customs and Superstitions among the Betshuana," (*South African*) *Folklore Journal*, i. (1879) p. 34. The word *molemo* means both poison and medicine. Compare Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), p. 252.

[2] Above, pp. 120 *sq.*

[3] J. Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 168.

benefit the cow and her calf, just as the boiling and eating of the milk by the widow is certainly supposed by the Bechuanas to benefit the cattle, which otherwise would perish; but in what precisely the saving virtue of the ceremony consists is as obscure in the one case as in the other.

Among the Kafirs of South Africa persons in a kraal, where a man or a beast has been killed by lightning, may not drink milk until they have been purified by the medicine-man.

Among the Kafirs of South Africa it is a rule that when lightning has struck a kraal, killing man or beast, no person in the kraal may drink milk until a medicine-man has come and performed certain purificatory ceremonies over all the inhabitants. He begins by tying a number of charms round the neck of every person in the place for the avowed purpose of giving them power to dig the grave of the man or animal who has been killed; for if the victim is a beast, it is always buried and never eaten. When the burial is over, an animal is killed in sacrifice, and a fire is kindled, in which certain charms of wood, or roots, are burned to charcoal and then ground to powder. Next, the medicine-man makes incisions in various parts of the bodies of every one in the kraal, and rubs a portion of the powdered charcoal into the cuts; the rest of the powder he puts into sour milk and causes all the people to drink the mixture. After that they are free to drink milk again in the usual way, and their heads being shaved, they are pronounced clean and may quit the kraal and associate with their neighbours, neither of which they might do until the ceremony of purification had been performed.[1] The essence of the ceremony appears to be a kind of inoculation designed to guard the inmates of the kraal against a repetition of the thunder-stroke. Till the rite has been duly carried out, the inhabitants are seemingly supposed to be electrified by the shock, and to be capable of discharging the electricity with fatal effect on any persons with whom they may come into contact. Hence the precaution of isolating or (in electrical language) insulating them from all their neighbours, till the man of skill has, so to say, tapped the electricity and allowed it to run off safely into the grave of the victim. If this interpretration of the rite is correct, we can easily understand why in their electrified condition the inhabitants of the kraal were forbidden to drink milk.

[1] Mr. Warner's Notes, in Col. Maclean's *Compendium of Kafir Law and Custom* (Cape Town, 1866), pp. 83 *sq.*

For on the principles of sympathetic magic, which are as plain to the savage as the multiplication table is to us, the drinking of milk by an electrified person would infallibly communicate an electric shock to the cow from which the milk was extracted; and nothing, humanly speaking, could save the life of the poor creature but the direct interposition of the medicine-man.

Belief as to the conjuring of milk from cows among the Kabyles.

Another curious example of sympathetic magic applied to the milk of cattle may here be mentioned, though it does not fall in with the instances hitherto cited. The Kabyles of North Africa believe that whoever gets possession of the herdsman's staff can conjure the milk of the herd into the udders of his own cows. Hence when he retires to his house in the heat of the day, a herdsman takes care not to let his staff go for a moment. To sell the staff or allow another to get hold of it during the siesta is an offence which is punished with a fine.[1]

Among the Akamba and Akikuyu of British East Africa intercourse between the human sexes is strictly forbidden so long as the cattle are at pasture, that is, from the time when the herds are driven out in the morning till the time when they are driven home in the evening.[2] This remarkable prohibition, first reported by a German observer some thirty years ago, might appear to an educated European to be founded on a simple sense of decency and a calculation of practical utility; but any such interpretation would totally misread the working of the native African mind. Subsequent inquiries proved that, as I had conjectured,[3] the intercourse of the human sexes is supposed to be in some way injurious to the cattle while they are at grass. An investigation was instituted by Mr. C. W. Hobley, and he found that "this custom still exists and is still strictly followed, but it refers only to the people left in the kraal, and does not apply to the herdsmen; if the people in the kraal infringed this prohibition it is believed that the cattle would die off, and also that the children would sicken: no explanation was

Among the Akamba and Akikuyu of British East Africa intercourse between the human sexes is forbidden while the cattle are at pasture, because such intercourse is believed to be injurious to the cattle.

[1] J. Liorel, *Kabylie du Jurjura* (Paris, N.D.), p. 512.

[2] J. M. Hildebrandt, "Ethnographische Notizen über Wakamba und ihre Nachbarn," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, x. (1878) p. 401.

[3] "Folk-lore in the Old Testament," *Anthropological Essays presented to Edward Burnett Tylor* (Oxford, 1907), p. 162.

offered as to why the herdsmen were exempt."[1] Among the Akamba in particular it is believed that "if a man cohabits with a married woman in the woods while the cattle are out grazing, it brings *makwa* [a curse] upon the cattle and they will die. The woman, however, is generally afraid of evil falling on the precious cattle, and confesses. The cattle are then taken out of their kraal, medicine is placed on the ground at the gate, and they are then driven back over the medicine, and this lifts the curse. The woman also has to be ceremonially purified by an elder."[2] Moreover, for eight days after the periodical festival which the Akikuyu hold for the purpose of securing God's blessing on their flocks and herds, no commerce is permitted between the human sexes. They think that any breach of continence in these eight days would be followed by a mortality among the flocks.[3]

Continence of sacred dairymen among the Todas.

The belief that the cohabitation of men with women is, under certain circumstances, injurious to the cattle, may explain why the most sacred dairymen of the pastoral Todas must avoid women altogether.[4] An idea of the same sort may underlie the Dinka custom which entrusts the milking of cows to boys and girls under puberty,[5] and the Kafir custom which restricts the use of fresh milk to young people and very old people; all other persons, that is, all adults in the prime of life, may use only curdled milk. Thus we read that "milk forms a favourite part of a Kafir's diet, and is preferred to all other food except flesh. Generally it is used only in a curdled state, young people and very old ones alone drinking

In some African tribes fresh milk may be drunk only by young or very old persons.

[1] C. W. Hobley, *Ethnology of A-Kamba and other East African Tribes* (Cambridge, 1910), p. 166. Compare Hon. Charles Dundas, "History of Kitui," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) p. 501, "One of the strictest rules forbids a man to cohabit with a woman while the cattle are out grazing"; *id.*, "The Organization and Laws of some Bantu Tribes in East Africa," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xlv. (1915) p. 274, "It was believed that if men and women cohabited during the hours in which the cattle were out grazing this would cause the stock to die."

[2] C. W. Hobley, "Further researches into Kikuyu and Kamba Religious Beliefs and Customs," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xli. (1911) p. 412.

[3] H. R. Tate, "Further Notes on the Kikuyu Tribe of British East Africa," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxiv. (1904) p. 261.

[4] W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas* (London, 1906), p. 236. Compare F. Metz, *The Tribes Inhabiting the Neilgherry Hills* (Mangalore, 1864), p. 20; W. E. Marshall, *Travels Amongst the Todas* (London, 1873), p. 137; J. W. Breeks, *An Account of the Primitive Tribes and Monuments of the Nilagiris* (London, 1873), p. 14.

[5] Above, p. 135.

fresh milk."[1] "Sweet milk is but food for babies, and only a few tribes would drink it. But clotted sour milk is food for men."[2] "In the south of Africa, it is only the children who drink milk in a sweet state; it is generally left to get sour in large earthen pans, or in bottles of quagga-skin. After two or three days the whey is carefully separated from the congealed mass, and in its stead they add a little sweet milk or cream, to allay the sourness of the curds."[3] Among the Ovambo of South-West Africa "milk is drunk quite fresh only by small children, probably never by grown persons."[4] Among the Baganda of Central Africa "milk was drunk curdled or clotted; no grown-up person cared to drink it fresh; it was, however, given fresh to young children and infants."[5] The Akikuyu of British East Africa make much use of the milk both of cows and goats, but only children drink it fresh.[6] Among the Bechuanas "there are two months in the year, at the cow-calving time, which is generally about the month of October, when none but the uncircumcised are permitted to use the milk of cows that have calved."[7] As the uncircumcised would usually be under puberty, it seems likely that this Bechuana rule is based on the idea that the intercourse of the human sexes may injuriously affect a cow in the critical time when she has lately dropped her calf. We have seen that in other tribes the first milk of a cow after calving may not be used in the ordinary way, but is either made over to boys or children, or is reserved for the use of one particular person who may drink no other milk.[8] Similar precautions are taken by the Badagas of Southern India to guard the first milk of a cow after calving from abuses which might conceivably endanger the health of the animal. Among them, we are told, a cow or buffalo which has calved for the first time has to be treated in a special manner. For three or five days it is not milked.

Special rules as to drinking the milk of cows that have just calved in Africa and India.

[1] Rev. Joseph Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country* (London, 1857), p. 28.

[2] Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), p. 59.

[3] E. Casalis, *The Basutos* (London, 1861), p. 145.

[4] Hermann Tönjes, *Ovamboland* (Berlin, 1911), pp. 69 *sq.*

[5] John Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), p. 418.

[6] H. R. Tate, "Further Notes on the Kikuyu Tribe of British East Africa," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxiv. (1904) p. 259.

[7] Rev. John Campbell, *Travels in South Africa, Second Journey* (London, 1822), ii. 202.

[8] Above, pp. 120 *sq.*

A boy is then chosen to milk it. He may not sleep on a mat or wear a turban, and instead of tying his cloth round his waist, he must wear it loosely over his body. Meat is forbidden to him, and he must avoid and abstain from speaking to menstruous women and classes, such as Irulas and Kotas, whose contact is deemed to involve pollution. On the day appointed for milking the animal, the boy bathes and proceeds to milk it into a new vessel, which has been purified by smearing a paste of *Meliosma* leaves and bark over it and heating it over a fire. The milk is taken to a stream, and a small quantity of it is poured into three cups made of *Argyreia* leaves. The cups are then put into the water, and the remainder of the milk in the vessel is also poured into the stream. In some places, especially where a Madeswara temple is close at hand, the milk is carried to the temple and given to the priest. With a portion of the milk some plantain fruits are made into a pulp and given to an Udaya, who throws them into a stream. The boy is treated with some respect by his family during the time that he milks the animal, and he is given food first. This he must eat off a plate made of *Argyreia* or of plantain leaves.[1] The intention of these elaborate rules is not stated, but we may conjecture that they all aim at safeguarding the cow or buffalo from the dangers to which at such a time the indiscriminate use of her milk by profane persons might, on the principle of sympathetic magic, expose the animal. And that the milk is entrusted here in India, as in some African tribes, to a boy rather than to an adult may be due to a belief in the injurious influence which the intercourse of the human sexes is apt to exercise on cattle.

Chastity observed by the persons in charge of the king's cows among the Banyoro.

The obligation of chastity laid in certain circumstances on persons who have charge of cows is strikingly illustrated by the account which Mr. John Roscoe gives of the care taken of the sacred cows from which the king of the Banyoro drew his principal source of nourishment. The account presents so many points of interest that I will subjoin it in the writer's words :—

"The king's diet was strictly regulated by ancient custom.

[1] Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), i. 88 *sq.*

The sacred cows of the king of the Banyoro.

He subsisted on milk and beef, but chiefly on milk. Vegetables and mutton he might not touch, and for his use a special herd of cows was kept. These were sacred animals which had to be guarded against coming into contact with other cows, and no one was permitted to drink the milk from them save the king and his servant appointed for the duty. The sacred herd of cows had special men to herd them and to attend to them constantly in order to prevent them from mixing with other cattle. They were kept in a part of the country where they could be kept from contact with the large ordinary herds of the king, and from mingling with the cattle of chiefs. From this herd nine cows were taken to the capital to provide milk for the king's use, the animals chosen being young cows with their first calves. When a cow was ready to travel after giving birth, she was taken to the royal residence to join the select number, and one of the nine was then removed to the general body of the sacred herd in the country. This most sacred herd of nine was called *Nkorogi*, and had to be jealously guarded against contact with a bull. The period for which each cow was kept in the *Nkorogi* herd was about two months, during which time both cow and calf had to be maintained in perfect condition. At the end of two months her place was taken by another cow, and she was removed, as already stated, to the country, and there kept for her milk to make butter for the king's use and for breeding purposes: she never returned to supply the king with milk.

Rules of life observed by the men and the boy who had charge of the sacred cows of the king of the Banyoro.

"The *Nkorogi* cows had three special men to care for them, in addition to a boy who brought them from the pastures daily. These men had assistants who took charge of the cows during the day when they were out at pasture. The boy chosen for the office of driving the cows to and from the pasture and of drinking the surplus milk from the king's supply was known as the 'Caller,' so named because he had to call out to warn people to leave the path, as he passed along with the cows. He thus announced their presence and gave people time to escape out of the way of the herd. He was taken from the Abaitira clan, had to be a strong healthy boy seven or eight years old, and retained the office of 'Caller' until he was old enough to marry, that is to say about seventeen years old, when the king ordered the Abaitira

clan to bring another young boy. The former boy, who was now deposed, was given a wife by the king and settled to ordinary pastoral life. Should the boy fall sick during his term of office, and the medicine-man consider the illness to be of a serious nature, he would be strangled; or, again, should he have sexual relations with any woman, he would be put to death. He had to guard against scratching his flesh or doing anything that might draw blood. On this account he was not allowed to go into tall grass, nor might he leave the path when going to bring the cows from the pasture lest he should prick or scratch himself. To strike this boy was an offence punishable with death, because the boy's life was bound up with that of the king, and anything that happened to him was liable to affect the king. Each afternoon before sunset the boy went for the *Nkorogi* cows, which were brought from the pastures to some place about a mile distant from the royal residence, when they were delivered to the boy, who then began to drive them thither, raising, as he did so, his cry to warn people from the path. Men and women now hurriedly hid in the grass and covered their heads until the herd had passed. The cry was repeated from time to time until the boy reached the kraal at the royal residence, where one of the three cow-men awaited him. Another important duty of the boy 'Caller' was to drink up the milk left by the king from his daily milk supply. No other person but this boy was permitted to drink any of the milk from the sacred cows, nor was the boy allowed any other food. The three milk-men in charge of the cows had special titles, *Mukologi*, *Munyuwanga*, and *Muigimbirwa*. Each day before going to milk the cows they purified themselves by smearing their heads, arms, and chests with white clay, and during their term of office, which lasted a year, they observed the strictest rules of chastity. They were never allowed to wash with water, but had to rub their bodies over frequently with butter, and any infringement of these rules was punishable with death."[1]

Strict chastity of the herdboy.

Strict chastity of the herdsmen.

The rule of strict chastity thus obligatory, under pain of

[1] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, pp. 10-12. Among the Banyoro "it is a mark of high distinction and of great trust to be admitted to the ceremony of the milk. The members of the royal family and the great chiefs do not enjoy such an honour. The having performed heroic deeds in war,

death, on all who had to do with the most sacred cows, was probably dictated primarily by a regard for the health of the cows, which might be thought to suffer in themselves and in their milk from any breach of it. The probability is confirmed by the parallel rule that the three sacred milk-men might not wash themselves with water, but were allowed, or rather obliged, to smear themselves frequently with butter; for among the pastoral Bahima, as we have seen,[1] men and women never wash, but smear themselves with butter instead, because they believe that water applied by a man to his body injures his cattle and his family to boot. But probably a breach of chastity committed either by one of the sacred milk-men or by the boy 'Caller' was thought to harm not only the cows but the king, who was in a relation of intimate sympathy with the animals through drinking so much of their milk. Certainly the boy 'Caller' was supposed to stand in such a relation to the king, no doubt through drinking up the leavings of the king's milk; for we are expressly told that "the boy's life was bound up with that of the king, and anything that happened to him was liable to affect the king." Hence the minute precautions which the boy had to take against scratching himself or drawing his blood were probably by no means purely selfish; we can hardly doubt that they were enforced on him from a belief that every scratch on his body entailed a corresponding scratch on the king's body, and that every drop of his blood shed drew a corresponding drop from the veins of his majesty. Nor was the rule of

Reasons for the chastity of the king's herdsmen and herdboy.

Sympathetic relation of the herdboy to the king.

the having shown an unalterable fidelity to the king, and, still more, the being in sympathy with him, are reasons which may admit men to this highest of all distinctions in the kingdom. Night having fallen, and the king's tables being set, those invited to the ceremony enter the grand hall of the royal mansion; the drums beat, the fifes whistle the royal march; the king takes a vase full of milk, drinks, and then passes it on to those present, who in turn drink also. When the ceremony is finished, the doors are opened, and the friends of the great men are admitted to the daily entertainment of getting intoxicated on copious libations, the king setting the example." See G. Casati, *Ten Years in Equatoria* (London and New York, 1891), ii. 53. To drink the king's milk was probably thought to form a physical bond, like the bond of the more familiar blood covenant, between the drinker and the king; and as, on the primitive theory of such covenants, each of the covenanters has power over the life of the other in virtue of the common substance, whether milk or blood, which has been taken into their bodies, it is natural that the king of Unyoro should have admitted to the privilege of sharing his milk only such men as he could absolutely trust.

[1] Above, p. 126.

chastity limited to the human guardians of the sacred cows; it was observed by the animals themselves all the while that their milk was drunk by the king, for we are told that during that time they "had to be jealously guarded against contact with a bull." This compulsory continence of the cows was in all probability dictated by a regard not so much for the animals themselves as for the king, who by drinking their milk was joined to them by a bond of such intimate sympathy that whatever happened to them necessarily affected him.

The sympathetic bond between a cow and her milk is apparently thought to be weakened when the milk is converted into sour curds or butter; hence pastoral tribes are less scrupulous in disposing of sour curds and butter than of milk.

Perhaps the practice of eating milk in the form of sour curds, which prevails among the pastoral tribes of Africa,[1] may spring not altogether from a preference for curds, but

[1] (Sir) Francis Galton, *Narrative of an Explorer in Tropical South Africa*, Third Edition (London, 1890), p. 85, "Sweet milk can hardly ever be obtained, because Damaras, like all other milk-drinking nations, use it only when sour"; F. Fleming, *Southern Africa* (London, 1856), pp. 218 *sq.*; *id.*, *Kaffraria and its Inhabitants* (London, 1853), pp. 108 *sq.*; L. Alberti, *De Kaffers aan de Zuidkust van Afrika* (Amsterdam, 1810), p. 36; E. Casalis, *The Basutos* (London, 1861), p. 145; Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), p. 59; F. Speckmann, *Die Hermannsburger Mission in Afrika* (Hermannsburg, 1876), pp. 107 *sq.*; E. Dannert, "Customs of the Ovaherero," (*South African*) *Folk-lore Journal*, ii. (1880) p. 63; Sir H. H. Johnston, *British Central Africa* (London, 1897), p. 431; H. R. Tate, "Further Notes on the Kikuyu Tribe of British East Africa," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxiv. (1904) p. 259. According to F. Fleming (*Southern Africa*, p. 219), "their use of curded, instead of sweet milk in their food, is founded on experience, the most violent internal inflammation being rapidly engendered, in that country, by the indiscriminate use of sweet milk." But this can hardly be the true reason, since in some tribes children are allowed to drink fresh milk freely, though adults abstain from it. See above, pp. 142 *sq.* As to the process of converting the fresh milk into sour curds, see F. Fleming, *Kaffraria*, pp. 108 *sq.*, "For milk-pails they use baskets, which are woven by the women of twisted grass, closely plaited together. As a specimen of native manufacture, these milk-baskets are very cleverly made, being quite waterproof. . . . From the baskets, the milk is all collected, and passed into a leathern bottle. These bottles are made of the skin of an animal, usually a small calf or sheep. The body being drawn through the neck, the legs cut off, and the orifices, so caused, sewn up, they form complete bags or bottles, without a seam, the neck being used as a mouth. . . . In these bottles is always left about a quart of the old store of the previous day, on which the new milk is poured; and this, in the heat, soon avails to turn all into sour curds." Compare Dudley Kidd, *l.c.*; H. Tönjes, *Ovamboland* (Berlin, 1911), p. 70. The latter writer says that fresh milk is converted into sour through exposure to the strong rays of the sun. On the other hand the Bechuanas, the Masai, and the Nandi drink milk both fresh and sour (John Campbell, *Travels in South Africa, Second Journey*, London, 1822, ii. 218; M. Merker, *Die Masai*, p. 32; A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi*, p. 24), and the Bahima drink it only fresh (John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, pp. 108 *sq.*). The Bedouins of Arabia "drink no whole-milk save that of their camels; of their small cattle they drink but the butter-milk" (C. M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, i. 325).

partly at least from a superstitious notion that the sympathetic bond between the cow and its milk is weakened or severed when the milk has been turned into curds or buttermilk, and that accordingly you run less risk of sympathetically hurting the cow when you eat curds than when you drink fresh milk. Such an idea at all events might explain why in some tribes the drinking of fresh milk is confined to children and old people, that is, to the classes who are physically unable to endanger the supply of the precious fluid by sexual commerce. The Bahima seem to suppose that the sympathetic bond between the milk and the cow is severed when the milk is converted into butter; for, whereas they will not sell the milk lest it should fall into the hands of persons who might injure the cows by drinking it, they never had any objection to parting with butter.[1] The Bahima, it is to be observed, use butter chiefly as an unguent to anoint their bodies, though at times they also eat it.[2] But the butter which a man applies to himself externally is probably not conceived to form so close a link between him and the animal as the milk which he takes internally; hence any improper use he may make of butter is less likely, on the principles of sympathetic magic, to injure the cow than an improper use of her milk, and accordingly it is less needful to guard against the abuse of butter than against the abuse of milk. Among the Todas the milk of the sacred herd may be freely consumed by the most holy dairymen, but what they leave over must be converted into clarified butter (*nei*) before it is sold; it may not be drunk by the profane in its original form as it came from the cow.[3] From all this it appears that any

[1] Major J. A. Meldon, "Notes on the Bahima of Ankole," *Journal of the African Society*, No. 22 (January 1907), p. 142, "In the old days before rupees and kauri-shells were introduced, butter was a common currency, but they could not sell the milk itself for fear that it might be drunk by some one who was forbidden to drink it." The consequence of the milk being drunk by such a person is supposed to be injurious to the cattle, as the writer explains in the same passage.

[2] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 108.

[3] W. E. Marshall, *Travels amongst the Todas* (London, 1873), p. 145. On the other hand, it is said that the village dairyman (*varshaly*, *wursol*), who does not rank with the most holy dairyman (*palaul*, *palol*), is not allowed to taste milk during his period of office, but may help himself to as much clarified butter (ghee) as he likes. See F. Metz, *The Tribes inhabiting the Neilgherry Hills* (Mangalore, 1864), p. 37.

process which converts milk into another substance, such as curds, butter, or cheese, may be regarded, though it need not necessarily be regarded, as snapping, or at all events weakening, the link which binds the milk to the cow, and, therefore, as enabling the milk in its new form to be used by the profane without injury to the cattle.[1] Among tribes which hold such views the operations of the dairy aim, so to say, at disenchanting the milk for the benefit of the cow, at breaking the tie which binds the two together, lest it should drag the animal down to death.

Objection of pastoral tribes to allowing milk to come into contact with flesh, because such contact is believed to injure the cows.

The theory that a cow remains in direct physical sympathy with her milk, even after she has parted with it, is carried out by some pastoral tribes to the length of forbidding the milk to be brought into contact either with flesh or with vegetables, because any such contact is believed to injure the cow from which the milk was drawn. Thus the Masai are at the utmost pains to keep milk from touching flesh, because it is a general opinion among them that such contact would set up a disease in the udders of the cow which had yielded the milk, and that no more milk could be extracted from the animal. Hence they can seldom be induced, and then only most reluctantly, to sell their milk, lest the purchaser should make their cows ill by allowing it to touch flesh. For the same reason they will not suffer milk to be kept in a pot in which flesh has been cooked, nor flesh to be put in a vessel which has contained milk, and consequently they have two different sets of pots set apart for the two purposes.[2] The belief and practice of the Bahima are similar. Once when a German officer, encamped in their country, offered them one of his cooking-pots in exchange for one of their milk-pots, they refused to

[1] When the Wanyamwesi are about to convert milk into butter, they mix it with the urine of cows or of human beings. The reason they gave to Stuhlmann for this practice was that it made the butter more saleable; but he believed, probably with justice, that the real motive was a fear that the cows would lose their milk if this procedure were not followed. See F. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika* (Berlin, 1894), pp. 78 *sq.*

[2] M. Merker, *Die Masai* (Berlin, 1904), p. 33; Max Weiss, *Die Völkerstämme im Norden Deutsch-Ostafrikas* (Berlin, 1910), p. 380; Paul Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika* (Leipsic, 1892), p. 288. The last of these writers does not mention the reason for the prohibition.

accept it, alleging that if milk were poured into a pot in which flesh had been boiled, the cow that had yielded the milk would die.[1]

Rule of pastoral tribes in Africa that flesh and milk may not be eaten at the same time.

But it is not merely in a pot that milk and flesh may not come into contact with each other; they may not meet in a man's stomach, because contact there would be equally dangerous to the cow whose milk was thus contaminated. Hence pastoral tribes who subsist on the milk and flesh of their cattle are careful not to eat beef and milk at the same time; they allow a considerable interval to elapse between a meal of beef and a meal of milk, and they sometimes even employ an emetic or purgative in order to clear their stomach entirely of the one food before it receives the other. For example, "the food of the Masai consists exclusively of meat and milk; for the warriors cow's milk, while goat's milk is drunk by the women. It is considered a great offence to partake of milk (which is never allowed to be boiled) and meat at the same time, so that for ten days the Masai lives exclusively on milk, and then ten days solely on meat. To such an extent is this aversion to bringing these two things into contact entertained, that before a change is made from the one kind of food to the other, a Masai takes an emetic."[2] These rules of diet are particularly incumbent on Masai warriors. Their practice is to eat nothing but milk and honey for twelve or fifteen days, and then nothing but meat and honey for twelve or fifteen days more. But before they pass from the one diet to the other they take a strong purgative, consisting of blood mixed with milk, which is said to produce vomiting as well as purging, in order to make sure that no vestige of the previous food remains in their stomachs; so scrupulous are they not to bring milk into contact with flesh or blood. And we are expressly told that they do this, not out of regard to their own health, but out of regard to their cattle, because they believe that the cows would yield less milk if they omitted to observe the precaution. If, contrary to

The rule among the Masai.

[1] M. Weiss, "Land und Leute von Mpororo (Nordwestecke von Deutsch-Ostafrika)," *Globus*, xci. (1907) p. 157; *id.*, *Die Völkerstämme im Norden Deutsch-Ostafrikas* (Berlin, 1910), p. 46.

[2] "Dr. Fischer's Journey in the Masai Country," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, New Monthly Series, vi. (1884) p. 80.

custom, a Masai should be tempted to eat beef and drink milk on the same day, he endeavours to avert the ill consequences of the act by tickling his throat with a stalk of grass so as to produce vomiting before he passes from the one article of diet to the other.[1] Similarly the Washamba of German East Africa never drink milk and eat meat at the same meal; they believe that if they did so, it would infallibly cause the death of the cow from which the milk was obtained. Hence many of them are unwilling to dispose of the milk of their cows to Europeans, for fear that the ignorant or thoughtless purchaser might kill the animals by mixing their milk with flesh meat in his stomach.[2] Again, the Bahima are a pastoral people and live chiefly on the milk of their cattle, but chiefs and wealthy men add beef to their milk diet. But "beef or other flesh is eaten in the evening only, and beer is drunk afterwards. They do not eat any kind of vegetable food with the beef, and milk is avoided for some hours: usually the night intervenes after a meal of beef and beer before milk is again drunk. There is a firm belief that the cows would sicken should milk and

The rule among the Washamba.

The rule among the Bahima.

[1] Joseph Thomson, *Through Masai Land* (London, 1885), pp. 429-431; (Sir) H. H. Johnston, "The People of Eastern Equatorial Africa," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xv. (1886) p. 15; Paul Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika* (Leipsic, 1892), pp. 287 *sq.*; Oscar Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle* (Berlin, 1894), pp. 161 *sq.*; M. Merker, *Die Masai* (Berlin, 1904), p. 33; Max Weiss, *Die Völkerstämme im Norden Deutsch-Ostafrikas* (Berlin, 1910), p. 380. Baumann and Merker give a rationalistic explanation of the rule not to eat boiled flesh and milk on the same day. They say that the Masai always cook flesh with the seasoning of a certain acacia bark called *mokota* (*Albizzia anthelmintica*), which, taken with milk, causes severe diarrhœa or dysentery, and that the observation of this effect is the reason why the Masai do not partake of flesh and milk together. But that this is not the true explanation of the custom is strongly suggested by (1) Merker's own statements, on the same page, that the Masai "avoid most carefully bringing milk into contact with flesh, because according to the universal opinion the udder of the cow which yielded the milk would thereby be rendered permanently diseased," and that "if a man has eaten boiled flesh one day, he drinks some blood next morning before drinking milk, not on considerations of health, but because he believes that were this custom not observed the cattle would give less milk"; (2) the fact that the same rule is observed by other tribes who are not said to use the *mokota* bark, and with regard to some of whom (the Banyoro, Bahima, and Washamba) it is expressly affirmed that they believe the mixture of meat and milk in the stomach to be injurious to the cattle. Hence we may confidently conclude that the same belief is the motive of the same custom with the Masai and with all the other pastoral tribes of Africa who observe the rule.

[2] A. Karasek, "Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Waschambaa," *Baessler-Archiv*, iii. (Leipsic and Berlin, 1913) p. 102.

meat or vegetable meet in the stomach."[1] So, too, the pastoral Banyoro abstain from drinking milk for about twelve hours after a meal of meat and beer; they say that such a period of abstinence is necessary, because "food eaten indiscriminately will cause sickness among the cattle."[2] Among the Nandi of British East Africa "meat and milk may not be taken together. If milk is drunk, no meat may be eaten for twenty-four hours. Boiled meat in soup must be eaten first, after which roast meat may be taken. When meat has been eaten, no milk may be drunk for twelve hours, and then only after some salt and water has been swallowed. If no salt, which is obtained from the salt-licks, is near at hand, blood may be drunk instead. An exception to this rule is made in the case of small children, boys and girls who have recently been circumcised, women who have a short while before given birth to a child, and very sick people. These may eat meat and drink milk at the same time, and are called *pitorik*. If anybody else breaks the rule he is soundly flogged."[3] Among the pastoral Suk of British East Africa it is forbidden to partake of milk and meat on the same day.[4] Although no reason is assigned for the prohibition by the writers who report the Suk and Nandi rules on this subject, the analogy of the preceding tribes allows us to assume, with great probability, that among the Suk and Nandi also the motive for interdicting the simultaneous consumption of meat and milk is a fear that the contact of the two substances in the stomach of the consumer might be injurious, if not fatal, to the cows.

The rule among the Nandi.

The rule among the Suk.

Similar, though somewhat less stringent, rules as to the separation of flesh and milk are observed by the Israelites to this day. A Jew who has eaten flesh or broth ought not to taste cheese or anything made of milk for an hour afterwards; strait-laced people extend the period of abstinence to six hours. Moreover, flesh and milk are carefully kept apart. There are separate sets of vessels for them, each bearing a special mark, and a vessel used to hold milk

Rule of the Jews that flesh and milk may not be eaten at the same time.

[1] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 108.

[2] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, pp. 64, 67, 71.

[3] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), p. 24.

[4] Mervyn W. H. Beech, *The Suk, their Language and Folklore* (Oxford, 1911), p. 9.

may not be used to hold flesh. Two sets of knives are also kept, one for cutting flesh, the other for cutting cheese and fish. Moreover, flesh and milk are not cooked in the oven together nor placed on the table at the same time; even the table-cloths on which they are set ought to be different. If a family is too poor to have two table-cloths, they should at least wash their solitary table-cloth before putting milk on it after meat.[1] These rules, on which Rabbinical subtlety has embroidered a variety of fine distinctions, are professedly derived from the commandment not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk; and in view of all the evidence collected in this chapter we can hardly doubt that the rules and the commandment in question do belong together as parts of a common inheritance transmitted to the Jews from a time when their forefathers were nomadic herdsmen subsisting mainly on the milk of their cattle, and as afraid of diminishing the supply of it as are the pastoral tribes of Africa at the present day.

Rule of pastoral tribes in Africa that vegetables and milk may not be eaten at the same time.

The rule among the Bahima.

But the contamination of milk with meat is not the only danger against which the pastoral tribes of Africa, in the interest of their cattle, seek to guard themselves by rules of diet. They are equally solicitous not to suffer milk to be contaminated by vegetables; hence they abstain from drinking milk and eating vegetables at the same time, because they believe that the mixture of the two things in their stomachs would somehow be harmful to the herd. Thus among the pastoral Bahima, of Ankole, "various kinds of vegetables, such as peas, beans, and sweet potatoes, may not be eaten by any member of the clans unless he fasts from milk for some hours after a meal of vegetables. Should a man be forced by hunger to eat vegetables, he must fast some time after eating them; by preference he will eat plantains, but even then he must fast ten or twelve hours before he again drinks milk. To drink milk while vegetable food is still in the stomach is believed to endanger the health of the cows."[2] So the Bairo of Ankole, "who eat sweet potatoes and ground-nuts, are not allowed to drink

[1] J. Buxtorf, *Synagoga Judaica* (Bâle, 1661), pp. 594-6; J. C. G. Bodenschatz, *Kirchliche Verfassung der heutigen Juden* (Erlangen, 1748), Theil iv. cap. ii. pp. 25 *sq.*

[2] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 137; compare *id.*, p. 108 (quoted above, pp. 152 *sq.*).

milk, as it would then injure the cattle."[1] When Speke was travelling through the country of the Bahima or Wahuma, as he calls them, he experienced the inconvenience of this scruple; for though cattle were plentiful, the people "could not sell their milk to us because we ate fowls, and a bean called *maharagŭé*." "Since we had entered Karagŭé we never could get one drop of milk either for love or for money, and I wished to know what motive the Wahŭma had for withholding it. We had heard they held superstitious dreads; that any one who ate the flesh of pigs, fish, or fowls, or the bean called *maharagŭé*, if he tasted the products of their cows, would destroy their cattle." Questioned by Speke, the king of the country replied that "it was only the poor who thought so; and as he now saw we were in want, he would set apart one of his cows expressly for our use."[2] Among the Banyoro "the middle classes who keep cows and also cultivate are most careful in their diet not to eat vegetables and to drink milk near together. Persons who drink milk in the morning do not eat other food until the evening, and those who drink milk in the evening eat no vegetables until the next day. Sweet potatoes and beans are the vegetables they avoid most of all, and each person, after eating such food, is careful to abstain from drinking milk for a period of two days. This precaution is taken to prevent milk from coming into contact with either meat or vegetables in the stomach; it is believed that food eaten indiscriminately will cause sickness among the cattle."[3] Hence in this tribe "no stranger is offered milk when visiting a kraal, because he may have previously eaten some kind of food which they consider would be harmful to the herd, should he drink milk without a fast to clear his system of vegetable food; their hospitality is shown by giving the visitor some other food such as beef and beer, which will prepare him for a meal of milk on the following morning. Should there be insufficient milk to supply the needs of the men in the kraal, some of

The rule among the Banyoro.

[1] Major J. A. Meldon, "Notes on the Bahima of Ankole," *Journal of the African Society*, No. 22 (January 1907), p. 142.

[2] J. H. Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (London, 1912), chapters vii. and viii. pp. 148, 169 (*Everyman's Library*).

[3] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, pp. 70 *sq.*

them will be given vegetables in the evening and fast until the following morning. Should there be no plantains and the people be reduced to eating sweet potatoes, it will be necessary to abstain from milk for two days after eating them, until the system is quite clear, before they may again drink milk."[1] Indeed in this tribe vegetable food is entirely forbidden to herdsmen, because "it is said to be dangerous to the health of the herd for them to partake of such food."[2] Coming as he does perpetually into contact with the herd, the herdsman is clearly much more liable than ordinary folk to endanger the health of the animals by the miscellaneous contents of his stomach; common prudence, therefore, appears to dictate the rule which cuts him off entirely from a vegetarian diet.

The rule that vegetables and milk may not be eaten at the same time among the Baganda, Suk, and Masai.

Among the Baganda "no person was allowed to eat beans or sugar-cane, or to drink beer, or to smoke Indian hemp, and at the same time to drink milk; the person who drank milk fasted for several hours before he might eat or drink the tabooed foods, and he might not drink milk for a similar period after partaking of such food."[3] Among the Suk any man who chews raw millet is forbidden to drink milk for seven days.[4] No doubt, though this is not stated, in both tribes the prohibition is based on the deleterious influence which a mixed diet of the people is supposed to exercise on their cattle. Similarly among the Masai, who are so solicitous for the welfare of their cattle and so convinced of the sufferings inflicted on the animals by boiling milk or drinking it with meat,[5] warriors are strictly prohibited from partaking of vegetables at all. A Masai soldier would rather die of hunger than eat them; merely to offer them to him is the deepest insult; should he so far forget himself as to taste the forbidden food, he would be degraded, no woman would have him for her husband.[6]

Pastoral peoples who believe that the eating of vege-

[1] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 67.

[2] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 64.

[3] John Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 418.

[4] Mervyn W. H. Beech, *The Suk, their Language and Folklore* (Oxford, 1911), p. 9.

[5] Above, pp. 120, 151 *sq.*

[6] Joseph Thomson, *Through Masai Land* (London, 1885), p. 430; Paul Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika* (Leipsic, 1892), p. 288; Oscar Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle* (Berlin, 1894), p. 161.

table food may imperil the prime source of their subsistence by diminishing or stopping the supply of milk are not likely to encourage the practice of agriculture; accordingly it is not surprising to learn that "in Bunyoro cultivation is avoided by the pastoral people: it is said to be harmful for a wife of a man belonging to a pastoral clan to till the land as, by doing so, she may injure the cattle."[1] Among the pastoral clans of that country "women do no work beyond churning and washing milk-pots. Manual work has always been regarded as degrading, and cultivation of the ground as positively injurious to their cattle."[2] Even among the Baganda, who, while they keep cattle, are diligent tillers of the soil, a woman might not cultivate her garden during the first four days after one of her husband's cows had been delivered of a calf;[3] and though the reason of the prohibition is not mentioned, we may, in the light of the foregoing evidence, surmise that the motive for this compulsory abstinence from agricultural labour was a fear lest, by engaging in it at such a time, the woman should endanger the health or even the life of the new-born calf and its dam.

Pastoral tribes discourage agriculture from fear of injuring their cattle.

Moreover, some pastoral tribes abstain from eating certain wild animals on the ground, expressed or implied, that if they ate of the flesh of such creatures, their cattle would be injured thereby. For example, among the Suk of British East Africa "there certainly used to be a superstition that to eat the flesh of a certain forest pig called *kiptorainy* would cause the cattle of the man who partook of it to run dry, but since the descent into the plains, where the pig does not exist, it remains as a tradition only."[4] And in the same tribe it is believed that "if a rich man eats fish, the milk of his cows will dry up."[5] Among the Nandi "certain animals may not be eaten if it is possible to obtain other food. These are waterbuck, zebra, elephant, rhinoceros, Senegal hartebeest, and the common and blue duiker. If a Nandi eats the meat of any of these animals,

Some pastoral tribes abstain from eating the flesh of certain wild animals lest by doing so they should injure their cattle.

[1] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 68.

[2] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 41.

[3] John Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 418.

[4] Mervyn W. H. Beech, *The Suk, their Language and Folklore* (Oxford, 1911), p. 10.

[5] Mervyn W. H. Beech, *l.c.*

he may not drink milk for at least four months afterwards, and then only after he has purified himself by taking a strong purge made from the *segetet* tree, mixed with blood." Only one Nandi clan, the Kipasiso, is so far exempt from this restriction that members of it are free to drink milk the day after they have eaten game. Among the animals which, under certain limitations, the Nandi are allowed to eat, the waterbuck is considered an unclean animal; it is often alluded to by a name (*chemakimwa*) which means "the animal which may not be talked about." And among wild fowl the francolin or spur-fowl is viewed with much the same disfavour as the waterbuck; its flesh may indeed be eaten, but the eater is forbidden to drink milk for several months afterwards.[1] The reasons for these restrictions are not mentioned, but in the light of the foregoing evidence we may assume with some confidence that the abstinence from milk for months after eating certain wild animals or birds is dictated by a fear of harming the cows through bringing their milk into contact with game in the stomach of the eater. The same fear may underlie the rule observed by the Wataturu of East Africa, that a man who has eaten the flesh of a certain antelope (called *povu* in Swahili) may not drink milk on the same day.[2]

The aversion of pastoral tribes to the eating of game in general may be due to a fear of injuring their cattle by contaminating their milk with the flesh of wild animals in the stomachs of the eaters.

Further, it may be worth while to consider whether the aversion, which some pastoral tribes entertain to the eating of game in general, may not spring from the same superstitious dread of injuring the cattle by contaminating their milk with the flesh of wild animals in the process of digestion. For example, the Masai in their native state are a purely pastoral people, living wholly on the flesh, blood, and milk of their cattle,[3] and they are said to despise every sort of game,

[1] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (London, 1909), pp. 24, 25.

[2] Oscar Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle* (Berlin, 1894), p. 171.

[3] S. L. Hinde and H. Hinde, *The Last of the Masai* (London, 1901), p. 77, "The Masai are a nomadic race, wandering over hundreds of miles of country in search of pasturage for their flocks and herds. Apart from their weapons, this live-stock represents their sole possessions; and upon it they are entirely dependent, since it forms their staple food. They do not touch fish, birds, reptiles, or insects, and live wholly upon the meat of their cattle, together with the blood of their flocks —which they are in the habit of drinking—and milk. In times of famine, grain and flour are occasionally obtained by their women from the Wakikuyu, but these form no part of their ordinary diet."

including fish and fowl.[1] "The Masai," we are told, "ate the flesh of no wild animals when in olden days they all had cattle; but some of those who have lost all their cattle are now beginning to eat venison."[2] As they did not eat game, and only hunted such fierce carnivorous beasts as preyed on their cattle, the herds of wild graminivorous animals grew extraordinarily tame all over the Masai country, and it was no uncommon sight to see antelopes, zebras, and gazelles grazing peacefully, without a sign of fear, among the domestic cattle near the Masai kraals.[3] Yet while in general the Masai neither hunted nor ate wild animals, they made two exceptions to the rule, and these exceptions are significant. "The eland," we are told, "is one of the few game animals hunted by the Masai. It is driven, and then run down and speared. Strangely enough, the Masai also eat its flesh, since it is considered by them to be a species of cow."[4] Another wild animal which the Masai both hunted and ate was the buffalo, which they valued both for its hide and its flesh; but we are informed that "the buffalo is not regarded as game by the Masai."[5] Probably they regard the buffalo, like the eland, but with much better reason, as a species of cow; and if that is so, the reason why they kill and eat buffaloes and elands is the same, namely, a belief that these animals do not differ essentially from cattle, and that they may therefore be lawfully killed and eaten by cattle-breeders. The practical conclusion is probably sound, though the system of zoology from which it is deduced leaves something to be desired. The Bahima, another pastoral tribe, who subsist chiefly on the milk of their cattle, have adopted similar rules of diet based on a similar classification of the animal kingdom; for we learn that "there are a few kinds of wild animals they will eat, though these are limited to such as they consider related to cows, for

Particular species of wild animals are allowed by the Masai and Bahima to be eaten, because they are thought to resemble cows.

[1] M. Merker, *Die Masai* (Berlin, 1904), pp. 33 *sq.*; Max Weiss, *Die Völkerstämme im Norden Deutsch-Ostafrikas* (Berlin, 1910), p. 380.

[2] A. C. Hollis, *The Masai* (Oxford, 1905), p. 319.

[3] S. L. Hinde and H. Hinde, *The Last of the Masai*, pp. 84, 120; M. Merker, *Die Masai*, p. 170; Max Weiss, *Die Völkerstämme im Norden Deutsch-Ostafrikas*, p. 354.

[4] S. L. Hinde and H. Hinde, *The Last of the Masai*, pp. 84 *sq.*

[5] S. L. Hinde and H. Hinde, *The Last of the Masai*, p. 84. According to these writers (p. 120) the buffalo and the eland are the only two game animals which the Masai eat.

example buffalo and one or two kinds of antelope, waterbuck, and hartebeest."[1] On the other hand, "the meat of goats, sheep, fowls, and all kinds of fish is deemed bad and is absolutely forbidden to any member of the tribe,"[2] apparently because these creatures cannot, on the most liberal interpretation of the bovine genus, be regarded as species of cows. Hence, being allowed to eat but few wild animals, the pastoral Bahima pay little attention to the chase, though they hunt down beasts of prey whenever these become troublesome; "other game is left almost entirely to men of agricultural clans who keep a few dogs and hunt game for food."[3] Similarly the flesh of most wild animals is forbidden to the pastoral clans of the Banyoro, and accordingly members of these clans hardly engage in hunting, except when it becomes necessary to attack and kill the lions and leopards which prey on the herds; "hunting is therefore in the main limited to members of agricultural clans and is engaged in by them for the sake of meat."[4]

The Hebrew distinction of clean and unclean animals is perhaps based on a classification of animals according as they resemble or differ from domestic cattle.

In all such cases it may well be that the aversion of pastoral tribes to the eating of game is derived from a belief that cows are directly injured whenever their milk comes into contact with the flesh of wild animals in the stomachs of the tribesmen, and that the consequent danger to the cattle can only be averted, either by abstaining from game altogether, or at all events by leaving a sufficient interval between the consumption of game and the consumption of milk to allow of the stomach being completely cleared of the one food before it receives the other. The remarkable exceptions which some of these tribes make to the general rule, by permitting the consumption of wild animals that bear a more or less distant resemblance to cattle, suggests a comparison with the ancient Hebrew distinction of clean and unclean animals. Can it be that the distinction in question originated in the rudimentary zoology of a pastoral people, who divided the whole animal kingdom into creatures which resembled, and creatures which differed from, their own domestic cattle, and on the basis of that

[1] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 108.
[2] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 137.
[3] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 138.
[4] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 85.

fundamental classification laid down a law of capital importance, that the first of these classes might be eaten and that the second might not? The actual law of clean and unclean animals, as it is set forth in the Pentateuch, is probably too complex to admit of resolution into elements so simple and so few; yet its leading principle is curiously reminiscent of the practice of some African tribes which we have been discussing: "These are the beasts which ye shall eat: the ox, the sheep, and the goat, the hart, and the gazelle, and the roebuck, and the wild goat, and the pygarg, and the antelope, and the chamois. And every beast that parteth the hoof, and hath the hoof cloven in two, and cheweth the cud among the beasts, that ye shall eat."[1] Here the test of an animal's fitness to serve as human food is its zoological affinity to domestic ruminants, and judged by that test various species of deer and antelopes are, correctly enough, included among the edible animals, exactly as the Masai and Bahima, on similar grounds, include various kinds of antelopes within their dietary. However, the Hebrew scale of diet is a good deal more liberal than that of the Masai, and even if it originated, as seems possible, in a purely pastoral state, it has probably been expanded by successive additions to meet the needs and tastes of an agricultural people.

Thus far I have attempted to trace certain analogies between Hebrew and African usages in respect to the boiling of milk, the regulation of a mixed diet of milk and flesh, and the distinction drawn between animals as clean and unclean, or edible and inedible. If these analogies are well founded, they tend to prove that the Hebrew usages in all these matters took their rise in the pastoral stage of society, and accordingly they confirm the native tradition of the Israelites that their ancestors were nomadic herdsmen, roaming with their flocks and herds from pasture to pasture, for many ages before their descendants, swarming across the fords of the Jordan from the grassy uplands of Moab, settled down to the stationary life of husbandmen and vine-dressers in the fat land of Palestine.

The Hebrew customs in regard to milk and a flesh diet probably originated in the pastoral stage of society.

The general purport of all the rules we have considered

[1] Deuteronomy xiv. 4-6; compare Leviticus xi. 2 *sq.*

The rules observed by pastoral tribes in regard to the drinking of milk seem intended, on the principle of sympathetic magic, for the good of the cattle rather than of the people who drink the milk.

in this chapter appears to be the protection of cattle, and more especially of cows, against the harm which, on the principles of sympathetic magic, may be done them by the abuse or misapplication of their milk, whether that abuse consists in the boiling of the milk, in the bringing of it into contact with alien substances, or in the drinking of it by persons whose condition is supposed to be, for one reason or another, fraught with danger to the herds. The rules are dictated by a regard for the health not of man but of beast; they aim at safeguarding the cow which yields the milk, not the person who drinks it. Indirectly, no doubt, they are believed to benefit the owners of the cows, who depend for their subsistence on the products of the herd, and who necessarily gain by the welfare and lose by the deterioration of the animals. Yet primarily it is the cows, and not the people, who are the immediate object of the lawgiver's solicitude, if we may speak of a lawgiver among tribes where immemorial custom takes the place of statutory legislation. Hence we may surmise that the elaborate ritual with which, for example, the Todas of southern India have fenced the operations of the dairy[1] was originally designed in like manner for the protection of the cows rather than of their owners; the intention, if I am right, was not so much to remove a taboo from a sacred fluid for the benefit of the people[2] as to impose a series of restrictions on the people for the benefit of the cattle. The aim of the ritual was, in short, to ensure that the herds should not be injured sympathetically through an abuse of their milk, particularly through the drinking of it by improper persons. That the Todas believe such injury to be possible appears

[1] See Captain Henry Harkness, *Description of a Singular Aboriginal Race inhabiting the Neilgherry Hills* (London, 1832), pp. 14, 16, 20 *sqq.*, 62 *sqq.*; F. Metz, *The Tribes inhabiting the Neilgherry Hills*, Second Edition (Mangalore, 1864), pp. 17, 19 *sqq.*, 29 *sq.*, 35 *sqq.*; J. W. Breeks, *An Account of the Primitive Tribes and Monuments of the Nilagiris* (London, 1873), pp. 8 *sq.*, 13 *sq.*; W. E. Marshall, *Travels among the Todas* (London, 1873), pp. 128 *sqq.*, 135 *sqq.*, 141 *sqq.*, 153 *sqq.*; and especially W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas* (London, 1906), pp. 38-248. The domestic cattle of the Todas are buffaloes, not oxen.

[2] As Dr. W. H. R. Rivers appears to think ("It seems most probable that the elaborate ritual has grown up as a means of counteracting the dangers likely to be incurred by this profanation of the sacred substance, or, in other words, as a means of removing a taboo which prohibits the general use of the substance," *The Todas*, p. 231).

from a remark made by a Toda to a missionary. Having ascertained the names of the Toda deities, the missionary was cited to appear before a headman to explain how he had come by the information. "I told him," writes the missionary, "that as he had no authority to judge me, I should not answer his question, to which he replied: that I had been drinking the milk of their buffaloes, on which account many of them would die."[1] This answer seems to imply that the milk of the buffaloes, even after it had been drawn from the cows, remained in such a sympathetic relation with the animals that the mere drinking of it by a stranger might cause their death. The implication agrees with the express belief of pastoral tribes in Africa.

Rites in regard to cattle which were originally magical in intention may afterwards come to be regarded as religious, and hence may merge in a worship of cattle.

Surveyed as a whole the evidence which we have passed in review suggests that many rites which have hitherto been interpreted as a worship of cattle may have been in origin, if not always, nothing but a series of precautions, based on the theory of sympathetic magic, for the protection of the herds from the dangers that would threaten them through an indiscriminate use of their milk by everybody, whether clean or unclean, whether friend or foe. The savage who believes that he himself can be magically injured through the secretions of his body naturally applies the same theory to his cattle and takes the same sort of steps to safeguard them as to safeguard himself. If this view is right, the superstitious restrictions imposed on the use of milk which have come before us are analogous to the superstitious precautions which the savage adopts with regard to the disposal of his shorn hair, clipped nails, and other severed parts of his person. In their essence they are not religious but magical. Yet in time such taboos might easily receive a religious interpretation and merge into a true worship of cattle. For while the logical distinction between magic and religion is sharp as a knife-edge, there is no such acute and rigid line of cleavage between them historically. With the vagueness characteristic of primitive thought the two are constantly fusing with each other, like two streams, one of blue and one of yellow water, which meet and blend into a

[1] T. Metz, *The Tribes inhabiting the Neilgherry Hills*, Second Edition (Mangalore, 1864), p. 43.

river that is neither wholly yellow nor wholly blue. But the historical confusion of magic and religion no more dispenses the philosophic student of human thought from the need of resolving the compound into its constituent parts than the occurrence of most chemical elements in combination dispenses the analytical chemist from the need of separating and distinguishing them. The mind has its chemistry as well as the body. Its elements may be more subtle and mercurial, yet even here a fine instrument will seize and mark distinctions which might elude a coarser handling.

CHAPTER III

BORING A SERVANT'S EAR

THE ancient Hebrew law enacted that when a purchased Hebrew slave had served his master for six years, he should be set free in the seventh year; but if the slave refused to accept his liberty because he loved his master and his master's house, then it was provided that his master should take an awl and thrust it through the slave's ear into the door, after which the slave should serve him for ever.[1] Such is the provision made for cases of this sort in Deuteronomy. In the early code known as the Book of the Covenant, which is preserved in the Book of Exodus,[2] a similar provision is made in somewhat different terms as follows: "But if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto God, and shall bring him to the door, or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever."[3] In this latter and probably older form of the ordinance several points remain obscure or doubtful. Was the ceremony of boring the slave's ear to be performed at a sanctuary or in the master's house? On this question the commentators are divided. Some hold that the ceremony took place at a sanctuary;[4] others are of opinion that it was performed at the door of the master's house.[5]

Hebrew custom of boring the ear of a purchased slave who refused to go free after serving his master for six years.

[1] Deuteronomy xv. 12-17.

[2] Exodus xx. 22-xxiii. 33.

[3] Exodus xxi. 5 *sq.*

[4] So Aug. Dillmann and A. H. McNeile in their commentaries on Exodus; H. Wheeler Robinson in his commentary on Deuteronomy (in *The Century Bible*); and J. Estlin Carpenter and G. Harford-Battersby (*The Hexateuch*, London, 1900, i. 55 *sq.*).

[5] So W. H. Bennett and S. R. Driver in their commentaries on Exodus.

Again, while in Deuteronomy it is clearly enacted that the servant's ear is to be pinned to the door by the awl, in Exodus it is merely provided that the ear is to be pierced with an awl at the door or door-post, whether of a sanctuary or of the master's house, but it is not declared, though it may be implied, that the ear is to be fastened or nailed to the door or door-post by means of the awl.

The meaning of the custom uncertain.

The exact meaning of the ceremony also remains obscure in spite of the efforts of the commentators to elucidate it. Its general purport appears to be rightly given by Driver: "The ear, as the organ of hearing, is naturally that of obedience as well; and its attachment to the door of the house would signify the perpetual attachment of the slave to that particular household."[1] It is little to the purpose to compare an enactment in the ancient Babylonian code of Hammurabi: "If a slave has said to his master, 'You are not my master,' he shall be brought to account as his slave, and his master shall cut off his ear,"[2] for this mutilation need not necessarily have any reference to the ear as an organ of hearing and obedience; it may be merely a form of punishment and a brand of infamy, as it continued to be in English law down to the seventeenth century.[3] Again, the commentators point out that the piercing of the ears and the wearing of ear-rings were common practices with men as well as women among Oriental peoples in antiquity;[4] for example, we know that the custom prevailed among the Syrians,[5] Arabs,[6] Meso-

The custom of piercing ears and wearing ear-rings in antiquity.

[1] S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus* (Cambridge, 1911), p. 211.

[2] C. H. W. Johns, *Babylonian and Assyrian Laws, Contracts and Letters* (Edinburgh, 1904), p. 67, § 282 of Hammurabi's code.

[3] In the reign of Charles the First the lawyer Prynne and the Scottish divine Leighton were condemned by the Star Chamber to lose their ears for the supposed pernicious tendency of their published writings. See H. Hallam, *Constitutional History of England*, ch. viii. vol. ii. pp. 37 *sq.* (London, 1876).

[4] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xi. 136, "*In Oriente quidem et viris aurum eo loco* [scil. *auribus*] *gestare decus existimatur.*" As to the custom see J. E. B. Mayor's note on Juvenal, *Sat.* i. 104; G. B. Winer, *Biblisches Realwörterbuch*[2] (Leipsic, 1833–1838), ii. 205 *sq.*, *s.v.* "Ohrringe"; A. Knobel, quoted by Aug. Dillmann, *Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus* (Leipsic, 1880), p. 227.

[5] Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrhon.* iii. 203, p. 169 ed. Im. Bekker, *τό τε ἑλλόβια ἔχειν τοὺς ἄρρενας παρ' ἡμῖν μὲν αἰσχρὸν ἐστι, παρ' ἐνίοις δὲ τῶν βαρβάρων, ὥσπερ καὶ Σύροις, εὐγενείας ἐστὶ σύνθημα.*

[6] Petronius, *Sat.* 102, p. 70 ed. F. Buecheler (Berlin, 1882), "*Pertunde aures, ut imitemur Arabes.*"

potamians,[1] Carthaginians,[2] Libyans,[3] Mauretanians,[4] Lydians,[5] Persians,[6] and Indians.[7] But there is no evidence that among any of these peoples the piercing of the ears and the wearing of ear-rings was a badge of servitude; on the contrary in some of these races, particularly the Syrians, Persians, and Indians, such trinkets appear to have been regarded as marks of honour and good birth.[8] Hence they can hardly throw light on the Hebrew custom with which we are here concerned, the less so because neither in Exodus nor in Deuteronomy is anything said about inserting ear-rings in the slave's ears; all that is laid down is, that his ear should be pierced with an awl.

Ear-boring practised from superstitious motives.

If the nailing of the slave's ear to the door of his master's house was not, as it may have been, merely a symbolic act emblematic of that attachment and devotion to his master's service which the ceremony was designed to secure, it is possible that superstition may have co-operated in some way to strengthen the link between the two men. How it may have done so remains obscure, but there are some cases of ear-boring in which a superstitious motive appears to play a part, and which may perhaps throw some light on the Hebrew custom. Thus among the Gamants, a religious and perhaps Jewish sect in Abyssinia and Shoa, when a woman has given birth to her first child, she bores the lobes of her

Ears of woman pierced after birth of her first child.

[1] Juvenal, *Sat.* i. 104 *sq.*, "*Natus ad Euphraten, molles quod in aure fenestrae* || *arguerint.*"

[2] Plautus, *Poenulus*, v. 2. 21, "*Incedunt cum anulatis auribus.*"

[3] Macrobius, *Saturn.* vii. 3. 7, "*Octavius, qui natu nobilis videbatur, Ciceroni recitanti ait:* Non audio quae dicis. *Ille respondit:* Certe solebas bene foratas habere aures. *Hoc eo dictum est quia Octavius Libys oriundus, dicebatur, quibus mos est aurem forare.*" Compare Plutarch, *Cicero*, 26.

[4] Dio Cassius, *Hist. Rom.* lxxviii. 11, Ὁ δὲ δὴ Μακρῖνος τὸ μὲν γένος Μαῦρος . . . καὶ τὸ οὖς τὸ ἕτερον κατὰ τὸ τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν Μαύρων ἐπιχώριον διετέτρητο.

[5] Xenophon, *Anabasis*, iii. 1. 31, Ἐπεὶ ἐγὼ αὐτὸν εἶδον ὥσπερ Λυδὸν ἀμφότερα τὰ ὦτα τετρυπημένον.

[6] Agathias, *Hist.* iii. 28, Ἐλλόβια . . . ὁποίοις οἱ ἐντιμότεροι τῶν Μήδων ἐναγλαΐζονται (where "Medes" means "Persians," as often in Greek writers). We read of a Persian king who wore a magnificent pearl in an ear-ring in his ear. See Procopius, *De bello Persico*, i. 4. 14.

[7] Strabo xv. 1. 59, p. 712, ed. Casaubon, χρυσοφοροῦντα μετρίως ἐν τοῖς ὠσι (the pupil of a Brahman); Q. Curtius Rufus viii. 9. 21, "*Lapilli ex auribus pendent: bracchia quoque et lacertos auro colunt, quibus inter populares aut nobilitas aut opes eminent*"; *id.*, ix. 1. 30, "*Pendebant ex auribus insignes candore et magnitudine lapilli*" (of an Indian king).

[8] See the testimonies of Sextus Empiricus, Agathias, Strabo, and Quintus Rufus, cited above.

ears, and inserts wooden wedges in the holes, till the lobes, extended by the weight, droop down so far as sometimes to touch the shoulders. The writer who reports the custom remarks that a similar custom is observed by the Botocudos of Brazil and by some tribes of Murray Island in Torres Straits; but he probably means no more than that a similar mode of distending the lobes of the ears was practised generally by these tribes, without intending to imply that the fashion was limited to women after the birth of a first child.[1] Among the Nilotic tribes, who call themselves Ja-Luo and inhabit the country of Kavirondo, at the north-eastern end of Lake Victoria Nyanza, "if a woman has had two children and they have both died, she will upon the birth of the third child take it out of the village on a basket-work tray and place it in the road; an old woman who has had a hint of this will go and pick it up and take it to her house, then the father of the child goes and buys it back for a goat; having recovered it the father bores the lobe of its right ear and inserts a small ear-ring of brass wire. If the child is a boy it is henceforward called Owiti and if a girl it is called Awiti, meaning the child that has been thrown away. The old woman who picked up the child is afterwards called mother in addition to the real mother."[2] Similarly among the Wawanga of the Elgon District, in British East Africa, "a mother, whose children are sickly or die, places the next infant born to her out on the road leading to the village and

In some African tribes the ears of a child whose elder brothers or sisters have died are pierced, and a pretence is made of exposing the child and buying it back from a stranger.

[1] E. Rüppell, *Reise in Abyssinien* (Frankfort-on-Main, 1838–1840), ii. 148-150. Among the Botocudos the custom seems to have been universal with men as well as with women; the ears of children of both sexes were bored in their seventh or eighth year, and the apertures were gradually enlarged by the insertion of larger and larger cylinders of wood. See Maximilian Prinz zu Wied-Neuwied, *Reise nach Brasilien* (Frankfort-on-Main, 1820–1821), ii. 5 *sqq.* Among the natives of Torres Straits the custom seems to have been similar, except that with them the lobe of the ear, after being distended, was generally severed on the side nearer the face, so as to form a pendulous fleshy cord. See *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits*, iv. (Cambridge, 1912) pp. 10 *sqq.*, 40 *sq.* The distension of the ears by the insertion of weight is practised by other tribes, for example by the Masai, Nandi, and Andorobo of East Africa. See M. Merker, *Die Masai* (Berlin, 1904), pp. 136 *sqq.*; Sir Harry Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate*, Second Edition (London, 1904), ii. 805, 866; A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), p. 27.

[2] C. W. Hobley, *Eastern Uganda* (London, 1902), p. 28. Compare Sir Harry Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate*, Second Edition (London, 1904), ii. 793, compare *id.* p. 748.

arranges with an old woman to pick it up and bring it back to the village. Before doing so, the old woman pierces one of its ears and fastens a bead or piece of iron wire in it, which it wears till it is grown up. On arrival in the village, she ties in its hair a wooden charm and a cowrie, which the child keeps until its mother is again confined. If for any reason it is found necessary to shave the child's head, the lock of hair to which the charm is fastened is kept. The lock of hair is finally cut off and the head shaved by the old woman who picked it up on the road. Such a child is given the name of Magokha, or Nanjira. For her services the old woman is given a present of a fowl, some *sim-sim* and chiroko, and a piece of beef."[1] According to another account, the old woman who brings back the seemingly forsaken babe to its mother "has to receive a present of a goat before she will give up the child, and she is henceforward looked upon as a sort of godmother to the child."[2] Under similar circumstances a similar custom is observed by the Wageia of East Africa, and among them also the person who restores the forsaken babe to its family is rewarded with a goat. But we are not told that the child's ear is pierced.[3]

Children whose elder brothers or sisters have died are thought to be exposed to particular danger from the evil spirits who are supposed to have carried off the elder children; hence special

Why should the right ear of a child, whose elder brothers or sisters have died, be bored and an ear-ring inserted in the hole? The answer is not obvious, but it will probably depend on the general meaning of the whole ceremony, of which the piercing of the child's ear is only one part. Hence we must begin by asking, why should such a child be exposed on the public road, apparently for any one to pick up and carry away? Why should the father of the child be obliged to buy back his own child from the finder by the payment of a goat? Why should the woman who brings back the child to its mother be treated as the child's second mother or at least as its godmother? Fortunately the usages observed under similar circumstances in many parts of the world enable us to answer these latter questions with a fair degree

[1] Hon. Kenneth R. Dundas, "The Wawanga and other tribes of the Elgon District, British East Africa," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) pp. 45 *sq.*

[2] C. W. Hobley, *Eastern Uganda*, p. 17.

[3] Max Weiss, *Die Völkerstämme im Norden Deutsch-Ostafrikas* (Berlin, 1910), p. 228.

precautions are taken to save their lives, such as giving them bad names and disguising or mutilating them, in order to deceive or disgust the demons.

of probability. Many people are of opinion that when a woman loses her children in infancy one after the other by death, the infants have been carried off by demons or other envious spirits, and that extraordinary precautions are necessary to save the life of the next child born to the mother. These precautions take various forms. Some of them are intended to render the child mean, contemptible, and disgusting, in order that the spirits may not care to carry off so unprepossessing a brat. For this purpose the child is clothed in rags, half buried in ashes or muck, and called by ugly, opprobrious, or filthy names which may be supposed to excite the aversion of the spirits and so to prevent them from meddling with the infant. Other measures which aim at outwitting the demons are to disguise the child past recognition, as by dressing it either as a girl if it is a boy, or as a boy if it is a girl; or again to pretend to bury it, in order that the demons, imagining the child to be really dead, may trouble no more about it. Apart from such devices, the meaning of which is plain enough, the child is sometimes subjected to certain mutilations, such as piercing an ear or a nostril, cutting off a piece of an ear or a joint of a finger, or scarring the face; and the exact signification of these mutilations is not always obvious, though their general intention no doubt is to preserve the child's life by protecting him or her from the assaults or the wiles of the dangerous and insidious spirits who have already killed the infant's elder brothers or sisters. Examples of these curious practices will illustrate these general remarks and perhaps throw light on the particular mutilation of the ears with which we are here immediately concerned.

Among the Annamites children are called by ill names, are sold to smiths, and have iron chains attached to their legs to prevent them from being carried off by demons.

Thus among the Annamites of the Nguôn-So'n valley, when parents have lost several children in early youth, they will sometimes call the next child *Xin*, which means "begged" or "beggar." This is done to deceive the demons (*ma*) who have carried off the elder children. Hearing such a name, the demons will not imagine that a pretty little child is meant; they will think it is something mean and contemptible and will leave it alone. Sometimes, to complete the deception, the mother will take the child and go about with it begging from door to door. For a like reason some

children are called by filthy or grotesque names in order to throw the prowling devils off the scent.[1] Another contrivance which these same Annamites employ to guard their newborn babes against evil spirits deserves to be mentioned, though we are not told that it is reserved for the exclusive benefit of infants whose elder brothers and sisters have fallen victims to the malignity of their spiritual foes. When a child is born, the parents will sometimes sell it to the village smith, who makes a little ring of iron and puts it on the child's foot, commonly adding to the ring a small chain of iron. No sooner has the infant been sold to the smith and firmly attached to him by the chain, than the demon is supposed to lose all power over it. When the child has grown big and the danger is over, the parents ask the smith to break the iron ring and thank him for his services. No metal, it is believed, except iron will answer the purpose of guarding the infant.[2] In this case the precautions taken against the demons are manifold. The sale of the infant to the smith is probably designed to throw dust in the eyes of the devils, who will now hastily conclude that the parents are childless; the ring and chain, by which the child is, so to say, tethered to its adopted parent, clearly prevent the insidious foe from snatching it away; and the solidity of the fetters is reinforced by the nature of their material, since iron is notoriously a substance which devils and demons cannot abide, and which accordingly forms an effectual barrier against them.[3] Among the Chinese, "a man who has only one son, or who has lost sons by death, and now has another born, will endeavour to bind soul and body together, by a collar of thick silver wire worn round the neck till the boy has

Chinese custom of putting a silver wire on a child's neck to save its life.

[1] Le R. P. Cadière, "Coutumes populaires de la vallée du Nguôn-So'n," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, ii. (1902) p. 357. Another French missionary says of the Annamites, "They imagine also that if they gave their child a beautiful name, the devil would think well of the child and would carry it off; so they give it the ugliest name they can find. If any one takes it into his head to say that their child is pretty, they are angry, for they are persuaded that the devil, overhearing the compliment, will carry the infant away." See "Lettre de M. Guerard, missionnaire apostolique au Tong-King," in *Nouvelles Lettres Édifiantes des Missions de la Chine et des Indes Orientales*, vii. (Paris, 1823) pp. 194 *sq.*

[2] Le R. P. Cadière, *op. cit.* pp. 354 *sq.*

[3] On iron in this connexion I may refer to *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, pp. 232 *sqq.* (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part ii.).

grown to the verge of manhood. In every village amongst the hills of Chuki, lads are to be seen thus adorned."[1]

Precautions taken by parents in Celebes and Borneo to save the lives of children whose elder brothers and sisters have died, by giving them ill names, making black marks on their faces, and calling on the demons to take or leave the infants.

Among the Gorontalo people of Central Celebes, when a woman has had two sons who have died, and she gives birth to a third son, a pretence is made of giving away the child to some one in order to deceive the spirits who brought about the deaths of the elder brothers. Similarly in Posso, a district of Central Celebes, when a child is very sickly, a new name is bestowed on it for the purpose of inducing the spirits, who are causing the sickness, to suppose that the child is not the same but another.[2] Among the Bare'e-speaking Toradjas of Central Celebes, as among many other peoples, it is customary for a man to be named after his children as "Father of so-and-so," and for a woman similarly to be named after her children as "Mother of so-and-so." But Toradja parents who have lost children, one after the other, by death, call themselves not father and mother, but grandfather and grandmother, of the next child born to them, in the belief that the spirits will now think them childless, and that they will therefore spare the life of the so-called grandchild.[3] The Kayans of Borneo believe that young children are peculiarly subject to the malevolent influence of certain mischievous spirits whom they call *Toh*. Hence parents who have lost several young children will name their next child Dung or Birds' Dung or Bad, because they imagine that such a repulsive name will give the child a better chance of escaping the unwelcome attention of the spirits. If for any reason they suspect that a child has

[1] Ven. Arthur E. Moule, *New China and Old*, Third Edition (London, 1902), p. 231. Among the Bagobos of the Davao district in Mindanao, who believe that a person's good spirit resides on the right side of his body, "it is a common thing when a child is ill to attach a chain bracelet to its right arm and to bid the good spirit not to depart, but to remain and restore the child to health." See Fay-Cooper Cole, *The Wild Tribes of Davao District, Mindanao* (Chicago, 1913), p. 105 (*Field Museum of Natural History, Publication 170*).

[2] Alb. C. Kruijt, "De adoptie in verband met het matriarchaat bij de Toradja's van Midden-Celebes," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*, xli. (1899) p. 86. As to changing a sick child's name for the purpose of deceiving the spirits, see also N. Adriani en Alb. C. Kruijt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes* (Batavia, 1912–1914), ii. 67.

[3] N. Adriani en Alb. C. Kruijt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes* (Batavia, 1912–1914), ii. 67 *sq.*, 100. As to the custom of naming parents after their children, see *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, pp. 331 *sqq.*

attracted the notice of one of these fiends, they will make a black mark with soot on the little one's forehead, consisting of a vertical line with a horizontal bar just above the eyebrows. Such a mark is believed so to disguise the child that the spirit will hardly be able to recognize its victim. Even adults sometimes adopt the same precaution when they think they are particularly exposed to the assaults of demons, for example, when they go away from the house. Under similar circumstances the Sea Dyaks of Borneo sometimes go a step farther. They place the newborn child in a small boat and let it float down the river, while, standing on the bank, they call upon all the evil spirits to take the child at once, if they mean to take it at all, in order that the parents may be spared the greater bereavement of losing their offspring some years later. If, after floating some distance down stream, the child is found unhurt, the parents carry it home, feeling some confidence that it will be spared to grow up.[1] Similarly in Laos, a district of Siam, when a child has been born in a house, it is placed in a rice-sieve, and the grandmother or other near female relative lays it at the head of the staircase or ladder by which the house is reached from the ground. There the woman calls in loud tones to the spirits to come and take the child away or for ever to let it alone. However, lest they should accept the invitation in good faith, strings are tied to the infant's wrists on the first night after its birth, no doubt to prevent its abduction by the spirits, just as in Annam for a similar purpose a newborn babe is hobbled with a ring and chain fastened to one of its feet. But "on the day after its birth the child is regarded as being the property no longer of the spirits, who could have taken it if they had wanted it, but of the parents, who forth-

Custom in Laos of calling on the demons to take a newborn child or leave it for ever alone.

[1] Charles Hose and William McDougall, *The Pagan Tribes of Borneo* (London, 1912), ii. 24. Among the Bare'e-speaking Toradjas of Central Celebes, when a child is carried out of the house for the first time, its face is blackened with charcoal, "in order that the spirits may not desire the wight for themselves and make themselves masters of its soul. For the same reason you may not praise a child or use such phrases as 'How fat it is!' 'How well it looks!' and so forth, because in that way also the attention of the spirits would be directed to it. . . . We even know mothers who gave their children names like 'Dog's penis' and 'Pig's dung,' and such like, 'because otherwise the spirits would fetch the children away.'" See N. Adriani en Alb. C. Kruijt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes*, ii. 63.

with sell it to some relation for a nominal sum—an eighth or a quarter of a rupee perhaps. This, again, is a further guarantee against molestation by the spirits, who apparently are regarded as honest folk that would not stoop to take what has been bought and paid for." [1]

The pretence of exposing newborn children and buying them back from strangers is probably an attempt to deceive the demons who might otherwise carry them off.

In view of these customs we can perhaps understand the reasons why in some African tribes, as we saw, children whose elder brothers or sisters have died are exposed on the public road and afterwards bought back by their parents from the friends who have discovered and brought home the forsaken infants.[2] The exposure may be intended to give the spirits an opportunity of carrying off the babes if they desire to do so; and the subsequent purchase may be a sort of reinsurance of the child based on a confiding trust in the commercial honesty of the spirits, who are presumed to be too honourable to appropriate what has been purchased, if not with hard cash, at least with a solid goat. Concurrently with this train of thought, or perhaps in conflict with it, is probably a wish to conceal the true parentage of the infant by handing it over temporarily to the care of a stranger, because, being thus rendered apparently childless, the parents are more likely to evade the scrutiny of the evil spirits. This is expressly alleged as the motive for the Gorontalo practice of committing a newborn son, after the deaths of his two elder brothers, to the care of some person other than the parents, and it is with this fraudulent intention that a Toradja father calls himself the grandfather of his own child.[3] The same motive may explain the custom observed in some East Indian islands, as in Amboyna and Ceram, where parents, who have lost several children by death, give the next-born child to relations or friends to be suckled and nurtured. When the child has reached a certain age, in some islands his fifth year, he is restored to his parents, who are bound to reward the foster-parents with a present of gongs or dishes.[4] That the wish to put their child out of reach of the spirits who have carried off his elder brothers and sisters is the real motive with parents for thus parting with their offspring,

East Indian custom of giving children, whose elder brothers and sisters have died, to relations or friends to be suckled and brought up.

[1] Carl Bock, *Temples and Elephants* (London, 1884), pp. 258 *sq.*

[2] Above, pp. 168 *sq.*

[3] Above, p. 172.

[4] J. G. F. Riedel, *De sluik- en kroesharige rassen tusschen Selebes en Papua* (The Hague, 1886), pp. 75, 136 *sq.*, 327.

perhaps for years, is strongly suggested by the precautions which in some of these islands are avowedly adopted to guard infants against the attacks of demons. Thus in Amboyna and Ceram young children are seldom or never left alone, lest evil spirits should molest them or carry off their souls;[1] and in Amboyna, when an infant is born with a caul, that natural appendage is sometimes dried, reduced to powder, and given to the child to eat for the purpose of preventing him from seeing the evil spirits; for such children are credited with the possession of second sight.[2] Apparently the notion is that, by eating the caul which blindfolded his eyes at birth, the little one will be blinded to the horrible apparition of spectres. Among the To Lalaoos of Central Celebes, when parents fear that a newborn baby will die like its little brothers and sisters before it, they arrange with a married couple among their relations to play the following little comedy. The parents expose the child near the entrance to the village; their relatives come strolling by, and, perceiving the forsaken babe, they ask "Whose child is this?" A voice from the village answers, "We do not know." So the kindly couple pick up the foundling, take it home, and rear it as their own, until, all fear of its dying untimely being over, it can return to its real parents.[3] Here the intention of thus concealing the true parentage of the infant is most probably to deceive the spirits, by leading them to suppose that the real father and mother are childless.

African devices for saving the lives of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

Among the Nandi of East Africa, "whenever several children in one family have died, the parents place a newly born babe for a few minutes in a path along which hyenas are known to walk, as it is hoped that they will intercede with the spirit of the dead, and that the child's life will be spared. If the child lives it is called *chepor* or *chemaket* (hyena)."[4] Perhaps by naming the child "hyena" the parents expect to deceive the ancestral spirits into imagining that the little one is really a wild beast and not a human child at all, and that, labouring under this delusion, they will spare the infant's life. Another way of eluding the spiritual

[1] J. G. F. Riedel, *op. cit.* pp. 75, 136.

[2] J. G. F. Riedel, *op. cit.* p. 74.

[3] N. Adriani en Alb. C. Kruijt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes* (Batavia, 1912–1914), ii. 100.

[4] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), p. 7.

foe is adopted by the Bakongo of the Lower Congo. When a woman has given birth to sickly children who have died one after the other, she seeks to guard against a repetition of the misfortune as follows. A medicine-man conducts her to a cross-road, where he draws a chalk mark on the path, digs a trench, and pours water into it. Then interlocking the little finger of his right hand in the corresponding finger of the woman, he helps her over the water three times. After that it is believed that any children the woman may bear will live and not die. The notion seems to be that the spirits who carried off her former children cannot follow her across the water, so that all her subsequent infants will be safe.[1]

Siberian devices for saving the lives of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died, by giving them ill names, etc.

Among the rude races of Siberia similar fears prompt parents to adopt similar precautions for the safety of their progeny. Thus, for example, "among the natives of the Altai, if a person loses all his children, one after another, his newborn child is given as ill-sounding a name as possible; for instance, *It-koden* ('dog's buttocks'), thus trying to deceive the spirits which kidnap the soul, making them believe that it is really a dog's buttocks. In a similar manner, wishing to convince the spirits that the new-born child is a puppy, the Yakut call the child *It-ohoto*, that is, 'dog's child.' The Gilyak, on their way home after hunting, call their village *Otx-mif* ('excrement country'), in the belief that evil spirits will not follow them to such a bad village."[2] Among the Goldi of the Amoor, when several children of a family have died, a name of evil signification or of some reptile will be bestowed on the next infant.[3] But these savages do not always trust to the cheap and easy device of ugly names; they sometimes adopt more elaborate precautions. Thus among the Uriankhai, a Buryat tribe in the Ulukhem district, when the first children die young, the next child at birth is hidden under the cooking cauldron, and on the top of the cauldron are placed a fetish made from the skin of a hare and a figure

[1] John H. Weeks, *Among the Primitive Bakongo* (London, 1914), p. 230.

[2] Waldemar Jochelson, *The Koryak* (Leyden and New York, 1908), p. 61 (*The Jesup North Pacific Expedition*, vol. vi.). Compare W. Radloff, *Aus Sibirien* (Leipsic, 1884), i. 316.

[3] *Tour du Monde*, Nouvelle Série, iii. (Paris, 1897) p. 618, from *Chez les Bouriates de l'Amour*, par M. Chimkievitch, ch. iv.

kneaded out of barley-meal, which represents the child. A shaman is then called in and performs his incantations over the dough puppet. According to the belief of the people, the puppet by virtue of the enchantment comes to life, its abdomen is cut open, blood begins to flow, and the sufferer cries aloud. Its body is then cut into three parts and buried far away from the house. This ceremony is supposed to protect the child from death.[1] How it is believed to effect this beneficent purpose we are not told; but in the light of the foregoing evidence we may surmise that, whereas the real child is hidden from the demons under the cooking cauldron, the dough image of it is palmed off on them instead, while to lend the utmost degree of verisimilitude to the deception thus practised on the fiends the dummy is actually brought to life by the skill of the magician. That this is the true explanation of the whole rite is made almost certain by a similar ceremony which the Diurbiut perform for a similar purpose. Soon after birth an infant is stolen by some relatives and hidden under a cauldron, where it remains for three days, well fed and tended. At the same time these relatives make an image of grass and throw it into the tent of the parents, who, on finding it, pretend to see in it their own dead child, and bewail and bury it with much ceremony. This, we are informed, is done to persuade the evil spirit, who wished to harm the child, that the infant is dead and buried.[2] Hence we may conclude that the burial of a dough puppet by the Uriankhai is in like manner a fraud practised on the ingenuous devils for the purpose of saving the life of the child whom the puppet represents.

Pretence of burying a live child in order to deceive demons.

In India, where the fear of demons is rife, and superstition flourishes with a rank luxuriance hardly surpassed elsewhere, similar motives have produced a rich crop of similar practices. As a rule, Hindoo parents give their children the names of deities or of deified heroes whose deeds are enshrined in the great national epics. But "a strange practice prevails where a number of children have been taken away by death. Instead of calling the later arrivals by the names of the deities, one is called Dukhi (pain),

Devices adopted in India to save the lives of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died, by giving them ill names,

[1] M. A. Czaplicka, *Aboriginal Siberia* (Oxford, 1914), p. 140.

[2] M. A. Czaplicka, *l.c.*

boring their nostrils, pretending to buy or sell them, etc.

another Tin Kauri (three cowry shells), Hāran (the lost one), etc., the idea being that when Yama, the god of Death, stalks by, noose in hand, seeking victims, and asks, Who goes there? hearing such names as these he will pass them as unworthy of notice. In after years, when the device has served its purpose, they may be exchanged for others."[1] But in India, as elsewhere, parents are often too anxious and fearful to trust to the efficacy of names alone to guard their dear ones. They resort to a variety of other precautions, some of them disagreeable and even cruel. Thus "in several South Indian families the name of Kuppan or Kuppusvami is a very common one. The bearer of this name will always have the right half of his nose bored, so much so that if ever we come across a man with such a mark in his nose we can call him Kuppusvanu. This name is given and the nose is bored when the first child in the family dies. To preserve the second child from the hands of death, its nose is pierced as soon as it is born, and it is rolled in a heap of rubbish that it may become distasteful to Yama, the god of death. If the child is a male, it is named Kuppusvanu, the lord of rubbish, and if female, Kupparchelu, the feminine of Kuppusvanu."[2] Here the rolling of the child in rubbish is clearly intended to justify his name, "the lord of rubbish," and thereby to impose the more effectually on the god of death. Similarly "in the Mysore Province the custom of boring the right side of the nostril of children whose elder brothers or sisters died soon after their birth prevails. Such children are called Gunda = Rock, Kalla = Stone, Hucha = Madman, Tippa = Dunghill. The last name is given after some rubbish from a dunghill has been brought in a sieve and the child placed in it."[3] So, too, in the Central Provinces of India "a woman who has lost her children repeatedly, either soon after their birth or a year or two afterwards, will, with the hope of preserving the next one, put the last newborn infant on a place sprinkled with water, where dust and other refuse are thrown. And then an old woman of the house pierces its right nostril, with a golden wire, giving it an

[1] W. J. Wilkins, *Modern Hinduism* (Calcutta and Simla, Preface dated 1900), pp. 13 *sq.*

[2] Pandit Natesa Sastri (Madras), in *North Indian Notes and Queries*, i. No. 6 (September 1891), p. 96, § 630.

[3] *The Indian Antiquary*, ix. (1880) p. 229.

opprobrious name, such as *Pentiah* = Dust-man, or *Pentamma* = Dust-woman; also *Pachkûrî* = Five-shells, *Dhamria* = Ten-shells, *Dôkûrî* = Two-shells, and so on." [1] The meaning of these latter names is explained by another writer on the folk-lore of the Central Provinces: "When a mother has lost several children, she will sometimes go through the formality of selling her child to a neighbour before it is born for the sum of five or ten shells or *kouries*. Since one hundred and twenty shells make one farthing, the child is supposed to be sold for one-twelfth, or one twenty-fourth of a farthing. In such a case the child goes through life with the name *Pach-kour* (five shells), or *Das-kour* (ten shells)." [2] The intention of such a mock sale is no doubt to circumvent the evil spirits who are supposed to have kidnapped the child's elder brothers or sisters; by transferring the new baby to another person they have apparently cancelled their relationship to it and so hope to elude the unwelcome attention of the demons. That this is the real motive for the pretence of selling children under these circumstances is made probable by the explanation which another writer gives of the observance of a mock sale of children under similar circumstances in Bombay. "Parents who have the misfortune to lose their children young, resort to the following, among other, methods of preserving the life of one or two. As soon as a child is born, it is consigned to the arms of a Dhed (scavenger) or other low-caste woman, with whom a previous understanding has been arrived at, through the back door. The woman then reappears at the front door with the child in her arms, and offers it for sale to the family as one of her own, when the parents give the woman some money and grain, and thus purchase it under the belief that since it is their fate to lose children, they have saved the life of this child by making believe that it is the scavenger's offspring." [3] Similarly among the Khasiyas and Bhotiyas of the

[1] M. R. Pedlow, "Superstitions among Hindoos in the Central Provinces," *The Indian Antiquary*, xxix. (1900) p. 88.

[2] E. M. Gordon, *Indian Folk Tales* (London, 1908), p. 40. Compare R. V. Russell, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), iv. 224.

[3] *Panjab Notes and Queries*, iii. No. 31 (April 1886), p. 112, § 491. Compare R. E. Enthoven, "Folklore of the Gujarat," *The Indian Antiquary*, xliv. (Bombay, 1915), Supplement, p. 101.

Almora district, in the United Provinces, when a woman's children have died, she hopes to save the life of her next born by giving him away to a religious ascetic (*jogi*), "so that he no longer belongs to her parents' household, and, therefore, escapes any evil fortune connected with it." The ascetic communicates his sacred formula to his pretended disciple by whispering it in the infant's ear, and, to complete the pretence of discipleship, he ties a bead of a certain sort round the baby's neck. Thereupon the parents buy back their offspring from the holy man for a sum of money.[1]

Devices adopted in Bengal to save the lives of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died, by giving them ill names, disguising their sex, and pretending to buy or sell them.

Similar pretences of selling children for nominal sums to their own parents are customary, for similar reasons, in Bengal, and many of the names bestowed on the children record the prices paid for them, such as Ekhaudî, one shell; Tinkaudî, three shells; Panchkaudî, five shells; Satkaudî, seven shells; and Nakaudî, nine shells, even numbers being regularly omitted. Such names are very common in Bengal, and invariably spring from the observance of this custom.[2] In Bihar, a province of Bengal, the manifold precautions, taken to save the lives of boys whose elder brothers are dead, include a mock sale. "Such children are treated and dressed as girls, sold to the midwife for a few cowries, and brought back again and given opprobrious names, in order to induce the demon of death to think them of small account and not worth killing."[3] As elsewhere in India, so in Bihar the noses of these infants are bored, no doubt (as we shall see presently)[4] to make them pass for girls with the demons. Such practices obtain among all castes in Bihar from Brahmans downwards, and the imagination of parents appears to exhaust itself in the effort to devise terms of contempt and derision by which to describe their offspring. From these flowers of rhetoric it may suffice to cull a few choice specimens, such as Famine-stricken, Blind, Dumb, Lame, Goitrous, Benumbed, Afflicted, One-eyed, Having-the-nose-bored, Sieve-shaped, Fire-place, Rags, Cricket, Grasshopper,

[1] Penna Lall, M.A., "An enquiry into the Birth and Marriage Customs of the Khasiyas and the Bhotiyas of Almora District, U.P.," *The Indian Antiquary*, xl. (Bombay, 1911) p. 191. In the quotation the words "her parents' household" seem to be a mistake of the writer or of the printer for "his parents' household."

[2] *The Indian Antiquary*, ix. (1880) p. 141.

[3] (Sir) George A. Grierson, *Bihār Peasant Life* (Calcutta, 1885), p. 387.

[4] See below, p. 185.

Bear, Sparrow, Fly, Fool, Mad, Scoundrel, Alligator, Lizard, Louse, and Dung-hill.[1] In Orissa, another province of Bengal, "there are often fictitious sales of children in order to save them from a premature death. The parents sell them at a small price to women belonging to such low castes as Dhoba, Hari, Dom, or Ghasi, and repurchase them at a higher price. There is an actual, though momentary, transfer, for the children are handed over to the low-caste woman, who gives them back to the parents after anointing them with turmeric powder mixed with water and oil. Similar sham sales are effected at the shrines of gods and goddesses, the priests in this case being the buyers. Among the middle and low classes children are named after the caste of the women to whom they are sold, so that a boy may be called Dhobai, Hari, Pan, Ghasia, or Dom, and a girl Dhobani, Hariani, etc. Such names are often given, too, by parents without any fictitious sale. The belief underlying these transactions is that the parents have committed some sin which can only be expiated by the death of the child, and that the low-caste woman takes the place of the parents and acts as a scapegoat."[2]

Mock sales of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died among the hill tribes of Assam.

Nor is the custom of these mock sales in India confined to Hindoos and Moslems; it is shared by some of the hill tribes of Assam who belong to the Tibeto-Burman family of mankind. Among the Lushais, when several children of a family have died young, the parents will carry the next baby and deposit it at a friend's house. Having left it there, they will afterwards return and ask, "Have you a slave to sell?" and buy back their own child for a small sum. This proceeding is supposed to deceive the demons (*huais*), whom the Lushais believe to haunt hills, streams, and trees, and to whom they attribute the causes of every illness and misfortune. Children who have been sold for the sake of eluding these dangerous devils always receive a name beginning with *Suak*, which means "a slave"; and as such names are frequent, the custom of the fictitious sale appears to be common also.[3]

[1] *The Indian Antiquary*, viii. (1879) pp. 321 *sq.*

[2] *Census of India, 1911*, vol. v., *Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikhim*, Part i. *Report*, by L. S. S. O'Malley (Calcutta, 1913), p. 332.

[3] Lieut.-Colonel J. Shakespear, *The Lushei Kuki Clans* (London, 1912), p. 82; as to the demons (*huais*), see *id.*, pp. 61, 65 *sq.*

Ill names given to children whose elder brothers or sisters have died, in the North-Western Provinces of India.

'In the North-Western Provinces of India also "when a first child dies, the next baby is given an opprobrious name as a protection against the Evil Eye and demoniacal influence generally. Such names are Tînkauri or Pachkauri ('bought for three or five cowries'); Kanchheda ('ear-pierced'), Nathua, Nakchhed, Chhidda ('nose-pierced'); Bhika or Bhikâri ('beggar'); Chhitariya, Ghasîta, Kadhera ('one put in a basket immediately after birth and dragged about the house'); Ghâsi ('cheap as grass'); Jhâu ('valueless as tamarisk'); Phûsa ('cheap as straw'); Mendu ('one taken immediately after birth and partly buried on the boundary of the field as if it were already dead'); Ghûri ('thrown on the dung-hill'); Nakta ('without a nose'), and so on. These practices are rarely employed in the case of girls, who are considered naturally protected."[1] Similarly on the north-western frontier of India, among the tribes of the Hindoo Koosh, "when one or two children in a family die, it is the custom to give the next born a mean name, such as, 'the unclean,' 'old rags,' in order to avert misfortune."[2]

Ill names given to children whose elder brothers or sisters have died, in the Punjab and Bombay.

In the Punjab also parental affection has recourse to similar remedies for similar domestic sorrows, and there, too, you may accordingly meet with persons who rejoice in such names as Waste-Cotton, Rat, Tom-Cat, Dust, Well-rope, Cowry, Donkey, and Dung-heap. The custom is not confined to Hindoos, but is practised equally by Mussulmans, Sikhs, and Sweeps; for as death makes no distinction between religions or castes, so the adherents of the various religions and the members of the various castes, however little they may agree in anything else, are unanimous in the belief that they can keep off the arch-foe by bestowing these unpleasant epithets on their infant progeny, especially when the virtue of the epithet is illustrated and emphasized by an appropriate ceremony. For example, the new baby will be put into an old winnowing-basket, with the sweepings of the house, and then dragged with it and them into the yard. After that he or she will bear the name of Winnowing-basket (*Chajju*) or Dragged (*Ghasîṭâ*). But in the Punjab

[1] W. Crooke, *Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh* (Calcutta, 1896), ii. 427; compare *id.*, iii. 99, 223.

[2] Major J. Biddulph, *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh* (Calcutta, 1880), p. 99.

it is generally sons, and not daughters, who are subjected to such ceremonies and receive such names; from which we may perhaps infer that less trouble is taken to save the lives of female than of male children.[1] Again, in Bombay a child whose elder brothers and sisters have died will sometimes receive the name of Sweep-back (*Kharáte-páthichá*), because with a view of saving his life the parents have set him on a low stool and swept his back lightly with the household broom,[2] doubtless to make the spirits imagine that the infant is no better than the dust and rubbish swept out of the house. Once more, in similar circumstances a child will sometimes be called Konia, if he is a boy, or Konema, if she is a girl, both names being derived from *koni*, "a hole," because "a hole (*koni*) is dug under the framework of the entrance door of the house where the birth has taken place; through this hole the newborn infant is passed from the outside into the house, and the name is pronounced."[3] We may conjecture that the reason for thus smuggling the baby into the house by a special opening made for it under the door is a desire to escape the notice of the evil spirits, who may be lying in wait for it at the usual entrance.

Child passed into the house through a hole under the doorway.

Sometimes when the bestowal of even so repulsive a name as Blockhead, Donkey, or Dung-heap appears to be insufficient to guard a beloved child against the attacks of a demon, and sickness threatens to unite the little one in death with his small brothers and sisters gone before, the anxious father will resort to stronger measures. With the aid of an exorcist he will attempt to carry the war into the quarters of the spiritual foe who is causing the sickness. Accompanying himself with taps on a drum, the wizard will first chant invocations to all the unmarried men who died in the family. Having further questioned the evil spirit, and learned from him who he is and how he contrived to enter, he so far works on the better feelings of the demon as to extract from him a promise that he will depart on receipt of the usual offering. Things having been brought to this point, the

Exorcism of spirits which threaten the lives of children.

[1] (Sir) R. C. Temple, "Opprobrious Names," *The Indian Antiquary*, x. (1881) p. 332.

[2] *Panjab Notes and Queries*, ii. No. 23 (August, 1885), p. 184, § 971.

[3] "Proper Names," *The Indian Antiquary*, x. (1881) p. 55.

afflicted child takes an old shoe between his teeth and repairs to the abode of the spirit and thence to a *pipal* tree, at the foot of which the devil goes out of him, leaving him senseless on the ground. A nail driven into the tree suffices to bung up the demon in the wood and to prevent him from returning to torment his victim; or the exorcist may shut him up in a bottle and bury bottle and bottle-imp deep underground.[1]

Goat sacrificed as a substitute for a child whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

Among the Mehtars or Doms, the caste of sweepers and scavengers in the Central Provinces of India, "if a woman's children die, then the next time she is in labour they bring a goat all of one colour. When the birth of the child takes place and it falls from the womb on to the ground no one must touch it, but the goat, which should if possible be of the same sex as the child, is taken and passed over the child twenty-one times. Then they take the goat and the after-birth to a cemetery, and here cut the goat's throat by the *halāl* rite and bury it with the after-birth. The idea is thus that the goat's life is a substitute for that of the child. By being passed over the child it takes the child's evil destiny upon itself, and the burial in a cemetery causes the goat to resemble a human being, while the after-birth communicates to it some part of the life of the child."[2] Apparently in this case the parents attempt to outwit the demons, who have a design on the life of the infant, by palming off a goat upon them instead of the child. Perhaps a similar notion of sacrificing a substitute for the infant may explain a curious custom observed by the Kawars, a primitive tribe who inhabit the hills in the Chhattisgarh districts of the Central Provinces of India. When the children of a family have died, the medicine-man or hedge-priest (*baiga*) will take the parents outside of the village and break the stem of some plant in their presence. After that, the parents never again touch that particular plant, and it is believed that any other children they may have will not die.[3]

Custom of piercing the nostrils of male

From some of the foregoing accounts we learn that in India children, whose elder brothers or sisters have died, not only receive disparaging names but frequently also have their

[1] *Panjab Notes and Queries*, ii. No. 22 (July, 1885), pp. 169 *sq.*, § 908.

[2] R. V. Russell, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), iv. 223 *sq.*

[3] R. V. Russell, *op. cit.* iii. 401.

right nostrils pierced. The writers whom I have thus far quoted say nothing as to the motive for piercing the nostrils, but the explanation is supplied by others. Thus we are told that in the Punjab, among the derogatory names, such as Scavenger, Old Shoe, Sweepings, and so forth, which a parent will bestow on his children after he has lost one or more by small-pox, there is one, namely Nathu, which signifies "Having a nose-ring (*nath*) in his nose"; and the reason for giving a child such a name is this. "If a man has lost several male children, the nose of the next born is pierced, and a nose-ring inserted in order that he may be mistaken for a girl, and so passed over by the evil spirits."[1] Similarly among the Handi Jogis, a Telugu caste of Mysore, "a son born after a number of deaths has his nose pierced and a ring put on, to deceive Fate to let it alone as being only a female."[2] And in the Central Provinces of India "a mother whose sons have died will sometimes bore the nose of a later-born son and put a small nose-ring in it to make believe he is a girl. But in this case the aim is also partly to cheat the goddess or the evil spirits who cause the death of children, and make them think the boy is a girl and therefore not worth taking."[3] Again, "another practice very prevalent in the Firozpur district among all classes and sects, but particularly among Sikhs and Hindus, is to dress up a son born after the death of previous sons as a girl. Such children have their noses pierced in signification of their being converted into girls, the pierced nose being the female mark *par excellence.* (The right nostril is the one pierced, and sometimes also the cartilage between the nostrils.) The mother makes a vow to dress up her boy as a girl for from four to ten years, the hair is plaited, women's ornaments worn, etc., and naked little boy-girls, as it were, can be seen running about in any village. Even where the custom is not fully carried out, the nose is pierced and a sexless name given," such as Nostril, Pierced, Nose-ring.[4]

children whose elder brothers or sisters have died, in order to disguise them as girls.

[1] J. M. Douie, "Opprobrious Names—Evil Eye," *Panjab Notes and Queries*, i. No. 3 (December, 1883), p. 26, § 219.

[2] H. V. Nanjundayya, *The Ethnographical Survey of Mysore*, xxix., *Handi Jogis* (Bangalore, 1913) p. 3.

[3] R. V. Russell, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), iii. 208.

[4] (Sir) R. C. Temple, "Opprobrious Names," *The Indian Antiquary*, x. (1881) p. 332.

Custom of begging gold or rags for children whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

Sometimes in India the right ear as well as the right nostril of such a child is pierced, and a knob of gold or a shell inserted in the hole.[1] According to one account, the gold which is to be used in making the golden knob and ear-ring must be begged from rich and poor; it is contrary to custom for the parents to make the ornament at their own expense.[2] The motive for begging the gold from others is probably a fear of attracting the attention and incurring the envy of the evil spirits by an ostentatious display of wealth; the parents desire to appear as poor and insignificant as possible in order that the demons may regard them as beneath their notice. For the same reason, as we saw, some people call their child a beggar and act up to the name by begging with it from door to door.[3] Similarly "it is a custom among some Hindu women, when they lose their first two children, to beg of three persons three rags as bedding for the third child. They also dig a grave, and fill it in, or roll the child in the dust, or in a tray filled with bran. Sometimes they beg for money instead of bran, and with the money collected have a silver ornament made, which they tie on to the neck of the child. This custom is very common among the Telugus."[4] For a like reason "a son is also clothed very shabbily if several of his elder brothers have died, no doubt because it is hoped that he will thus escape the notice of the godlings."[5] Again, we read that Sitala, the goddess of small-pox, "is the one great dread of Indian mothers. She is, however, easily frightened or deceived; and if a mother has lost one son by small-pox, she will call the next *Kurria*, he of the dung-hill; or *Báhurú*, an outcast; or *Márá*, the worthless one; or *Bhagwána*, given by the great god. So, too, many women dress children in old rags begged of their neighbours, and not of their own house, till they have passed the dangerous age."[6] So

[1] *The Indian Antiquary*, ix. (1880) p. 229; J. M. Douie, "Opprobrious Names—Evil Eye," *Panjab Notes and Queries*, i. No. 3 (December, 1883), p. 26, § 219.

[2] "Proper Names," *The Indian Antiquary*, x. (1881) p. 55.

[3] Above, pp. 170, 182.

[4] Edgar Thurston, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* (Madras, 1906), p. 535.

[5] J. M. Douie, "Opprobrious Names—Evil Eye," *Panjab Notes and Queries*, i. No. 3 (December, 1883), p. 26, § 219.

[6] (Sir) Denzil Jelf Ibbetson, *Report on the Revision of the Settlement of the Panipat Tahsil and Karnal Parganah of the Karnal District* (Allahabad, 1883), p. 150.

in the Punjab "parents who lose several children will turn a subsequent child into a beggar by dressing it up in ragged clothing borrowed of neighbours until it is five years of age and calling it Mangtá or Mangtú. As soon as possible it is also betrothed and thus made another's for life. This is done to children of both sexes in order to save their lives, the idea being that the misfortunes of the parents are passed on to those from whom the clothes, etc., are borrowed."[1] The motive here assigned for the custom may perhaps secretly co-operate with the desire to deceive the demons by shamming poverty; but if it were the common and notorious reason for resorting to the practice, it is difficult to believe that people would be willing to lend rags at the risk of incurring the very misfortunes of which they relieved their neighbours.

Pretence of burying children whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

The Telugu custom, mentioned above,[2] of digging a grave for a third child when the first two children have died, is probably, like the similar Siberian custom,[3] an attempt to put the demons off the scent of the new baby by leading them to suppose that the infant is already dead and buried. A more elaborate pretence of the same sort is made in the same circumstances by the Brahuis of Baluchistan. "If some poor mother has lost babe after babe, and is brought to bed yet again, the wise old women will put their heads together and will seek to save the life of the new-born in this fashion. When the pains of labour come upon the woman, they cut a slender twig off some green tree and place it by her side. And as soon as the babe is born, they measure the length of the twig against the measure of the babe, and whittle it down till it is neither too long nor yet too short. Then they raise the cry that the babe is dead. And they take the twig and lay it out and wash it and wrap it in a shroud, and bear it forth to the burial and lay it to rest in the grave-yard, for all the world as if it were in truth a dead child. So they return to the house, full sure that the evil spirits have been befooled, and that the new-born is safe from their malice."[4]

With a like beneficent intention Mohammedans in India

[1] *Indian Notes and Queries*, iv. No. 45 (June, 1887), p. 164, § 595.

[2] P. 186.

[3] Above, p. 177.

[4] Denys Bray, *The Life-History of a Brāhūī* (London, 1913), pp. 9 *sq.*

Custom of leaving unshorn the hair of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

sometimes shave the hair of a child whose life they wish to save, leaving only a single lock on one side of the head. This is called *pír kí sukh* or propitiation of the patron saint.[1] In Gujarat, "unfortunate parents, who have lost many children, vow to grow the hair of their little children, if such are preserved to them, observing all the time a votive abstinence from a particular dish or betel-nut or the like. When the children are three or five or seven years old, the vow is fulfilled by taking them to a sacred place, like the temple of Ranchhodji at Dakor, to have their hair cut for the first time."[2] The custom of allowing the hair to grow long in consequence of a vow is common to many races, though the motives for it are not always obvious;[3] but whatever the reason may be, the practice of keeping unshorn the hair of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died appears to be widespread. Thus in Java it is customary to crop the hair of children quite close, to shave it off completely, or to leave only one or two tufts on their heads. But at a place called Wanasaba, in Central Java, when parents have lost several children by death, they will not clip or shave the hair of the next-born child, but will suffer it to grow long, unkempt, and matted, till it resembles an unwashed sheepskin. In the belief of the people, this mode of wearing the hair serves to protect the child from sickness and misfortune, and later in life to ensure the success of his undertakings. At a subsequent time, generally when the child has shed its milk teeth, the long hair is cut off with a good deal of ceremony at a gathering of the family and friends, and the shorn locks are carefully buried.[4] Similarly, in the south and west of Madagascar the natives allow their children's hair to grow for one, two, or three years after birth, not only without cutting but even without combing or dressing it in any way, until the tangled

Apparently the child's guardian spirit or its own spirit is supposed to reside in the unshorn locks.

[1] J. M. Douie, "Opprobrious Names—Evil Eye," *Panjab Notes and Queries*, i. No. 3 (December, 1883), p. 26, § 219.

[2] A. M. T. Jackson, "The Folk-lore of Gujarat," *The Indian Antiquary*, xl. (Bombay, 1911), Supplement, p. 7 note*.

[3] For examples see G. A. Wilken, "Das Haaropfer," *De verspreide Geschriften* (The Hague, 1912), iii. 491 *sqq.*; *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, pp. 258 *sqq.* (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part ii.).

[4] E. Jacobson, "Das Haaropfer in Zentral-Java," *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, xxi. (Leyden, 1913) pp. 197 *sq.*

locks have coalesced into a filthy clotted mass resembling felt. They imagine that by this attention, or rather neglect, they ensure for the infant the protection of certain goblins or ancestral spirits, who will act as the child's guardian angels and preserve it in good health. Finally the hair is ceremonially cut by the father or mother or by the chief, who offers prayers and thanks to the guardian deities or spirits. The shorn locks are buried at the foot of a tree or thrown into a torrent.[1] In these cases the notion may be that the child's guardian spirit actually resides in the hair, and that to shear the head of the little one would be to dislodge and banish its powerful protector. So among the Hos of Togoland, in West Africa, "there are priests on whose head no razor has come throughout their whole life. The god who dwells in the man forbids the shearing of his hair under threat of death. If the hair at last grows too long, the owner must pray to his god to let him at least clip the extreme ends of it. For the hair is conceived as the seat and abode of his god; were it cut off, the god would lose his dwelling in the priest."[2] Other peoples leave a few locks of hair on a child's head as a refuge for its own soul, to which that sensitive being may retreat before the aggressive shears or razor when the rest of the hair is shorn or shaved. Such is the practice of the Toradjas of Central Celebes and the Karo-Bataks of Sumatra, and such is the theory by which they explain it.[3]

Desire to disguise children whose elder brothers or sisters have died by treating their hair in a special way, and piercing their noses and ears.

Another possible, though perhaps less probable, motive for treating in a special way the hair of a child whose elder brothers or sisters have died in infancy, might be a desire so to disguise or disfigure the child that he should either escape the notice or excite the aversion of those dangerous spirits who had carried off the other babies. According to Sir

[1] A. et G. Grandidier, *Ethnographie de Madagascar*, ii. (Paris, 1914) pp. 295-297 (*Histoire Physique, Naturelle et Politique de Madagascar*, vol. iv.).

[2] Jakob Spieth, *Die Ewe-Stämme* (Berlin, 1906), p. 229.

[3] A. C. Kruyt, "Het koppensnellen der Toradja's," *Verslagen en Mededeeligen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschapen*, Afdeeling Letterkunde, iv. Reeks iii. (Amsterdam, 1899), p. 198 note[2]; N. Adriani en Alb C. Krujt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes* (Batavia, 1912-1914), ii. 64; R. Römer, "Bijdrage tot de geneeskunst der Karo-Batak's," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*, l. (1908) p. 216. Compare *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, p. 263 (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part ii.).

Richard C. Temple, this latter motive underlies the practice of piercing the noses and ears of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died. "These ear-boring and nose-piercing customs," he tells us, "also arise from a wish to spoil the 'perfection' of the child. Unblemished or beautiful children are supposed to be the special delight of fairies, who walk off with them, and of the demons who possess them."[1] A like train of thought may perhaps further explain "an important class of customs which we may call the mutilating customs always arising from the idea of averting evil. In some cases the mother cuts off a piece of the child's ear and eats it, which gives rise to the name Bûrá, 'crop-eared.'[2] To this strange custom we shall find a parallel in Africa, to which we now return.

Interpretation of African treatment of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died: the fictitious sale of such children is intended to deceive the spirits who might otherwise carry them off.

In the light of the foregoing evidence we can now interpret with more confidence the East African customs of piercing the ears of infants whose elder brothers or sisters have died, and of temporarily transferring such children to strangers, from whom the parents are obliged to buy them back for a small sum.[3] It seems probable, if not certain, that in Africa, as in India, the nominal transference and purchase of an infant in these circumstances is an attempt to deceive the spirits, to whose malice the parents impute the deaths of their elder children. By purchasing the child from a stranger, who brings it to their door, they plainly insinuate that the child is not theirs but the offspring of the woman from whom they have bought it; and accordingly they imagine that the spirits, believing them to be childless, will no longer visit their house with evil intentions, and that if they deign to notice the purchased child at all, they will be either too indifferent or too honest to meddle with an article of property which has been fairly bought and paid for.[4]

[1] (Sir) R. C. Temple, "Opprobrious Names," *The Indian Antiquary*, x. (1881) p. 332. As to the custom of ear-piercing among the Hindoos, see also R. V. Russell, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), iv. 528 *sqq.*

[2] (Sir) R. C. Temple, *l.c.*

[3] See above, pp. 168 *sq.*

[4] The expedient of a mock sale is sometimes adopted in similar cases by the Bakongo of the Lower Congo, but they apply it, not to the child, but to the mother who has lost several children by death. She is sold for a nominal sum to a fetish-man, who by removing a bunch of plantains, which the woman carries on her head, is supposed to confer on her the power of bearing healthy children. See John H. Weeks, *Among the Primitive Bakongo* (London, 1914), p. 228.

African custom of piercing the ears of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

But while the African custom of selling children to their own parents under these circumstances is explained beyond the reach of reasonable doubt by the Indian parallels, it is not clear that the African practice of piercing the children's ears in such cases is explained by the similar Indian custom. For whereas in India the operation is performed on boys for the purpose of assimilating them to girls and so of deceiving the spirits with regard to the sex of the children, in Africa the operation is apparently performed alike on boys and on girls, and cannot therefore serve to disguise the sex of the child operated on. Hence we have still to inquire, What is the meaning of the African custom of piercing children's ears in this particular case? Before attempting to answer the question it may be well to consider the other devices to which African parents resort for the purpose of preserving the life of younger children whose elder brothers or sisters have died. On the whole these devices differ little from those which parental affection and superstitious fear have suggested to anxious fathers and mothers in many other parts of the world.

Ill names applied to children whose elder brothers or sisters have died among the Ewe tribes of Togo and the Anglo of Upper Guinea.

Among the Ewe tribes of Southern Togo, when a woman's children die one after another at birth, the people say that she has borne them only for death. So when her next child is born, the infant receives one of a special class of names called *dzikudziku* or "dying" names, which signify something mean, disagreeable, or repulsive, "in order that Death may feel no desire to meddle with the child," or "in order that Death may be deceived and fancy that these children are not human beings at all." Thus a child will be called *Ati* or "Tree," "in order that when Death sees the child, he may think it is a tree indeed and may not kill it." Or a child will be called Pig's-trough or Pig's-basket, and, in order to justify its name, it will be placed in a pig's trough or in a basket used for carrying pigs, before it is given to the mother. Or, again, the infant will be named after an inferior sort of yam, to imply that it is not so fine a child as its elder brothers and sisters, which resembled yams of the best quality. Or it will be called Hairs-on-the-maize-cob, because nobody eats these hairs but throws them away in the bush, with the implication, that the child deserves to be

cast away in like manner. Or the baby will receive a name meaning "Short Maize-cob," whereby the mother means to insinuate that the infant is not human at all, nothing but a contemptible little maize-cob. Other names bestowed on children whose elder brothers or sisters have died are "Sweepings," "She-has-thrown-him-away," "Death shall come and kill this child also," and "The number of children that die is greater than the number of those that remain in life." These names are given to children for the purpose of prolonging their life, and in the belief that the names have power to lengthen the span of their existence.[1] So among the Anglo people of Upper Guinea, "when parents lose their children again and again by death, they generally bestow depreciatory names on the next children in order thereby, as they believe, to divert the evil spirits from them; for they believe that the evil spirits are deceived when parents give their child a meaningless or hideous name."[2]

Ill names applied to children whose elder brothers or sisters have died in Madagascar.

Similarly, in Madagascar, "when parents have lost one or several of their children, they are in the habit of giving to those they have afterwards, at least during their early years, the name of an animal, or some other vile, ill-sounding name, for the purpose of averting the fate which has proved disastrous to their firstborn, and of warding off the evil spirits; for they believe that the evil spirits will let alone a child whom the parents think so lightly of that they call him by so mean a name. Hence there are persons known by such names as Mr. Beast, Mr. Little Dog, Mr. Crocodile, Mr. Rat, Mr. Little Pig, Miss Mouse, and so forth, or Miss Cow-dung, Mr. Rubbish-heap, Mr. Dunghill, Mr. Muck, Mr. Nobody, Mr. Rascal, and so on."[3]

Ill names applied to children whose elder brothers or sisters have died among the Basutos.

In like manner "the Basutos may call a girl *Moselantja* (Diminutive, *Mosele*), which means the 'Tail of a Dog.' This name is regarded as very repulsive, and it is given to a baby when the previous children who died had been given nice names. It is thought that were another nice name

[1] J. Spieth, *Die Ewe-Stämme* (Berlin, 1906), pp. 219 *sq.*, 616-618, 696; *id.*, *Die Religion der Eweer in Süd-Togo* (Leipsic, 1911), pp. 229 *sq.*

[2] G. Härtter (Missionar), "Sitten und Gebräuche der Angloer (Ober-Guinea)," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, xxxviii. (1906) p. 41.

[3] A. et G. Grandidier, *Ethnographie de Madagascar*, ii. (Paris, 1914) pp. 300 *sq.* (*Histoire Physique, Naturelle et Politique de Madagascar*, vol. iv.).

chosen this fresh child would also die. The spell is broken by choosing a disgusting name."[1] The vague notion of breaking a spell of bad luck is European rather than African; in giving bad names to his children the Basuto probably has a much more definite conception in his mind, namely, the notion of dangerous spirits who carry off children, but who can be deceived or diverted from their prey by the use of repulsive names. That this is the real motive at the back of the Basuto mind appears from the statement of a Catholic missionary who laboured in the tribe. "The ancestors," he says, "play a great part in all the concerns which interest the Kafir family. It is to them that these poor people give the name of 'gods,' and to whom they attribute good and especially evil fortune. If a child is sick, it is its grandmother or such-and-such another of its ancestors who is calling the feeble creature away, and the spirit must be appeased by a sacrifice. If a child dies, it will be necessary to resort to a stratagem in order to preserve the life of the next born. He will be given a name capable of terrifying the insatiable divinity, or perhaps he will be dressed in the garments of the other sex till he has grown up."[2] Thus the Basutos, like many Hindoo parents, do not always trust to the unaided efficacy of ugly names to protect their offspring; they sometimes disguise the sex of the child as an additional precaution against the malice or the affection of the spirits, who would draw away the little one, like its dead brothers and sisters, to the spirit-land. So in the Thonga tribe, about Delagoa Bay, when a mother has lost three or four children by death, she will dress her next born child, if it is a boy, in girl's clothing, and if the child is a girl, the mother will clothe her as a boy. Another way in which a bereaved Thonga mother seeks to ensure the life of her latest born is this. She carries the child to the house of her own parents, and there buries it up to the neck in the ash-heap. Then somebody runs to the village, takes grains of maize and throws them at the child. Afterwards the infant is dug up out of the ash-heap, washed, smeared

Custom of disguising the sex of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

Children whose elder brothers or sisters have died are sometimes buried in the ash-heap or the dunghill.

[1] Dudley Kidd, *Savage Childhood, a Study of Kafir Children* (London, 1906), p. 36.

[2] Letter of Father Deltour, dated "Basutoland, Roma, 1er décembre 1879," in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, lii. (Lyons, 1880) p. 365.

with ochre, and brought home. It is supposed that the performance of this ceremony will put a stop to the death of the woman's children.[1] Here the notion probably is that by burying the child in ashes you delude the ancestral spirits into supposing that it is not a human being but mere sweepings and refuse. Similar ceremonies, as we saw, are performed for a similar purpose in India to preserve the lives of infants whose elder brothers and sisters have died.[2] Among the Herero of South-West Africa we read of a child called "He is in the dung" (*Komombumbi*), because, three elder children of his father having died, the infant had immediately after birth been carried to the cattle pen and there covered up with dry cow's dung to save him from a speedy death.[3]

Among the Hausas children whose elder brothers or sisters have died are placed on a dunghill or ash-heap, and the sides of their heads are shaved alternately.

Similarly among the Hausas of North Africa, "when a mother has had several children who have died young, special care will be taken with the next, for it is recognised that the woman is a *wabi*—*i.e.* one fated to lose her offspring. One way is as follows. It is taken upon a cloth by the mother and placed disdainfully upon a dunghill, or upon a heap of dust, and left there by her, she going home and pretending to abandon it. But immediately behind her come friends, who pick it up, and take it back to her. The child will have only one half of its head shaved alternately until adult, and will be called Ajuji (Upon the Dunghill) or Ayashi (Upon the Dust-heap) according to the place upon which it was placed. A mother who thinks this procedure too drastic may call her child Angulu (Vulture) and trust to luck. This dirty bird is said to disgust the spirits. . . . The real explanation seems to be that the spirits do not want the child because of itself, but merely to punish the mother, and if so her best means of keeping it is to convince them that she would be glad if it went. Brass rings threaded on a string are worn around neck and waist until the child is adult, and the mother will shave half or the whole of her head, as already described, probably in

[1] Henri A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (Neuchâtel, 1912–1913), i. 191 *sq.*

[2] Above, pp. 178, 182, 183, 186.

[3] Rev. E. Dannert, "Customs of the Ovaherero at the birth of a child," (*South African*) *Folk-lore Journal*, ii: (1880) pp. 67 *sq.*; J. Irle, *Die Herero* (Gütersloh, 1906), p. 195.

order to render her unrecognisable by the *bori*," [1] that is, by the spirits.

Custom of shaving in a peculiar way the heads of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

The custom of shaving the two sides of such a child's head alternately is observed also by the Wolofs of Senegambia. Among them "when a woman has lost several children, she hopes to save the life of the survivor by shaving alternately one side of the child's head so that the hair is never of the same length on the two sides. This custom explains a peculiarity which often strikes a stranger on arriving for the first time in Senegambia." [2] In similar cases the Basutos shave the head of the surviving child, leaving a very small tuft of hair at the back,[3] and we have seen that under like circumstances a like custom is observed by Mohammedans in India, perhaps for the sake of disfiguring the child and so inducing the spirits to turn away from it in disgust.[4]

Custom of biting or cutting off part of the ear of a child whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

The same explanation possibly applies to a curious mutilation practised by the Tigrē tribes of Abyssinia. Among them, "if the mother of the babe has formerly lost children by death, she bites—lest this child die too—a little piece off the rim of his ear-shell, and taking it with a little cooked butter she swallows it; in this case a boy is called Ċerrūm or Qeṭūm, a girl Ċerremet or Qeṭmet (*i.e.* 'bitten'). Or else she calls him with an ugly name or surname." [5] A Hindoo mother likewise, as we saw, will sometimes bite off and swallow a piece of the ear of the child whose life she hopes thus to save.[6] Yet if such a practice were intended simply to make the infant unsightly in the eyes of the spirits, why should the mother swallow

[1] A. J. N. Tremearne, *The Ban of the Bori* (London, Preface dated 1914), pp. 104 *sq.*

[2] L. J. B. Bérenger-Féraud, *Les Peuplades de la Sénégambie* (Paris, 1879), p. 41.

[3] T. Arbousset et F. Daumas, *Relation d'un Voyage d'Exploration au Nord-est de la Colonie du Cap de Bonne-Espérance* (Paris, 1842), pp. 493 *sq.*

[4] Above, pp. 187 *sq.* In the Kolhapur district of the Konkan, in the Bombay Presidency, it is customary to tattoo one side of the bodies of female children, "especially in cases where the children in a family are short-lived." See R. E. Enthoven, "Folklore of the Konkan," *The Indian Antiquary*, xliv. (Bombay, 1915) Supplement, p. 63. Here also the intention may be to disfigure the child as a protection against the dangerous admiration or malice of spirits.

[5] Enno Littmann, *Publications of the Princeton Expedition to Abyssinia*, vol. ii. *Tales, Customs, Names and Dirges of the Tigrē tribes: English translation* (Leyden, 1910), p. 119.

[6] Above, p. 190.

the portion of the ear which she has bitten off? The act appears meaningless on this hypothesis, and accordingly we seem driven to look for another explanation. We shall return to this point presently. Meantime it is to be noted that a like mutilation is practised under like circumstances by the Masai. "If a Masai woman gives birth to a boy after the death of one of her sons, a small piece is cut off the ear of the newly-born babe and he is called Nawaya, *i.e.* from whom it has been snatched. When the child grows up his name is changed to Ol-owara, which has the same meaning. Sometimes children's ears are not cut, in which case they wear a special kind of bracelet, called En-daret, and a ring on one of their toes," namely, the second toe of the right foot.[1] Here the bracelet and toe-ring are clearly substitutes for the mutilation of the ear, and they are probably viewed as amulets which preserve the life of the wearer. This interpretation of the trinkets is rendered almost certain by a similar practice of the Nandi, a tribe closely akin to the Masai; for among the Nandi, "if a person dies, his next younger brother or sister has to wear a certain ornament for the rest of his or her life. This is not a sign of mourning, but is to prevent the evil spirit or disease from attacking the next member of the family. Little girls generally have an arrangement of beads called *songoniet*, which is attached to their hair and hangs over the forehead and nose. Boys and girls wear a necklace made of chips of a gourd (*sepetaiik*), and boys also at times wear a garment made of Colobus monkey-skin instead of goat-skin. Women wear an iron necklace, called *karik-ap-teget*, and men an iron armlet, called *asielda*."[2] Similarly a Hindoo parent who has lost several children will attempt to protect the survivor by loading him or her with amulets, one of which is sometimes an iron ring.[3] We saw that in Annam for the same purpose an iron ring is put on a child's foot.[4] Among the Swahili of East Africa, when a mother has lost two children by death, she will call her next child Runaway (*Mtoro*) and tie a string round his neck and

Bracelets, rings, or other trinkets worn as amulets by children whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

[1] A. C. Hollis, *The Masai* (Oxford, 1905), p. 306.

[2] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), p. 29.

[3] W. Buchanan, in *Panjab Notes and Queries*, iii. No. 35 (August, 1886), p. 186, § 777.

[4] Above, p. 171.

waist, "in order that he may not run away (that is, die) as his brothers or sisters have done before him." [1]

Special doorway cut for the use of a child whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

Among the Bateso of the Uganda Protectorate "as soon as we begin to investigate the significance of names, we find that infant mortality is to the fore in the minds of many parents. Opoloto is a common name, and this is given, like Wempisi, when many previous children have died at birth or soon after. At the same time a fresh doorway is cut in the side of the house for the use of the child; on no account must it be taken through the other, or allowed to use it when old enough to walk. A young white fowl is also selected and carefully kept; when the child gets big this fowl is killed and eaten by father and son together, the white feathers being stuck all round the child's special doorway. By this means it is thought evil will be averted from the child so that it may not suffer the fate of its predecessors." [2] The cutting of a special doorway in the side of the house for the use of such a child is probably a precaution intended to withdraw it from the observation of spirits, who naturally lie in wait for their prey at the ordinary doorway, never suspecting that their intended victim is passing freely out and in through a new doorway specially made for him in the wall. With a similar intent to deceive demons, as we saw, it sometimes happens that in India a special opening is made under the doorway and the infant smuggled through it into the house.[3]

Face of child whose elder brothers or sisters have died is marked with seven cuts among the Ewe negroes of Southern Togo.

The Ewe negroes of Southern Togo are not content with bestowing ugly or misleading names on children whose elder brothers or sisters have died. As a further precaution to ensure the life of the latest born infant, the aunt or grandmother, who names the child, marks it with seven cuts in the face, rubbing soot into the fresh wounds in order to stop the bleeding. If it is desired to make the mark very conspicuous by raising scars, a salve of cactus juice mixed with gunpowder is smeared over the wounds. The cuts are

[1] C. Velten, *Sitten und Gebräuche der Suaheli* (Göttingen, 1903), pp. 22 *sq.*

[2] Rev. A. L. Kitching, *On the Backwaters of the Nile* (London, 1912), p. 179. Compare *id.*, p. 181, "It is considered wiser to give ill-sounding names to children lest the spirits be roused to envy, hence the apparently contemptuous title of 'the rat.'"

[3] Above, p. 183.

disposed in two groups of three radiating from each of the eyebrows, with a single cut running obliquely across one of the cheeks. Instead of the cuts over the eyebrows, many children have two cuts extending obliquely over both cheeks. As the woman makes these incisions in the face of the newly born child, she turns to the spectators and says, "It shall live!"[1] According to another account, the child receives as many cuts on the forehead as it has dead brothers or sisters, and the cuts are made, not at birth, but at the time when the child begins to crawl on the ground.[2] The intention of this cruel, but no doubt kindly meant, mutilation is perhaps to disfigure the child and so to save its life by rendering it unalluring to the spirits, who might otherwise have carried it off.

Hottentot custom of biting or cutting off a finger-joint of a child whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

Other races are reported to inflict, in similar cases, a different and even more cruel mutilation on their children, and if the report is correct the custom may be susceptible of a similar explanation. But the evidence as to the observance of the custom by particular races appears to be either too scanty or too conflicting to allow us to pronounce with confidence on the question. Thus an old Dutch writer Boeving relates that "there are several Hottentots who have mutilated fingers; the cause of which is said to be this. If a mother loses her first child by death, she bites off a joint of a finger of her next born; superstitiously believing that that child becomes thereby more likely to live."[3]

Kolben's conflicting report concerning the custom.

But the Dutch writer Peter Kolben, who reports this statement, believed that Boeving had been misinformed. He says, "This is a very strange whim and as oddly worded in Boeving. He was impos'd on in the matter, as I was for almost my two first years residence at the Cape, but in another manner. The Hottentots about the Cape abus'd me into a belief, and, for the time I have mention'd, I continu'd in it very stedfastly, that those amputations were made to denote the pedigrees of the women; that the greater or more illustrious the family was from which a Hottentot woman was descended, the more joints were cut

[1] J. Spieth, *Die Ewe-Stämme* (Berlin, 1906), pp. 227 *sq.*

[2] "Namengebung und Hochzeitsbräuche bei den Togo-negern," *Globus*, lxxix. (1901) p. 351.

[3] Peter Kolben, *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope*, Second Edition (London, 1738), i. 309.

off from her fingers: so that I look'd upon this practice as the Hottentot heraldry, and on the mutilated fingers of the women as coats of arms for the honour and distinction of families; imagining that the honour or nobility of Hottentot families went only with the females. . . . I was not undeceiv'd till I made a sally up into the country; which I did not till I had remain'd almost two years at the Cape Town. The Hottentots who liv'd far from the Cape, and whose simplicity had not been corrupted by vicious European conversations, let me into the truth of the matter. And the truth is, that a Hottentot woman, for every marriage after her first, loses the joint of a finger, beginning at one of the little fingers. The re-marrying women are call'd so strictly to the observance of this custom, that there was not in my time at the Cape any memory I could meet with of its being evaded. After I had receiv'd this account of the matter, I examin'd from time to time the hands of abundance of Hottentot women, and never found any mutilated fingers but upon the hands of such as had married more than once. Not a mutilated finger is to be found among the Hottentot men; which must have been, were Boeving's account here true. Father Tachart is the only author that I know of who has hit upon the truth of this matter before me."[1]

G. Fritsch on the Hottentot custom of mutilating the fingers.

A more modern writer on the races of South Africa tells us that among the Hottentots, and especially among the women, mutilated fingers are very common, that the most frequent mutilation is that of a joint of the little finger, but that sometimes two joints of the little finger are missing and sometimes also the last joints of the next fingers. But he rejects Kolben's view as the exclusive explanation of the custom, because children as well as adults are undoubtedly to be seen with finger-joints wanting, which could not be the case if Kolben were right in thinking that only widows at remarriage are subjected

[1] Peter Kolben, *op. cit.* i. 309-311. Compare C. P. Thunberg, "An Account of the Cape of Good Hope," in John Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels* (London, 1808–1814), xvi. 141, "A widow, who marries a second time, must have the top joint of a finger cut off, and loses another joint for the third, and so on for each time that she enters into wedlock." But Thunberg may have simply borrowed from Kolben, whom he cites.

to this mutilation. Indeed, he partly reverts to the opinion which Kolben attempted to refute, observing that the amputation, "as an old author (Boeving) quite rightly remarked, is performed on children to protect them against injurious influences of any kind, not only, however, when one child has previously died, but, like the *Ubulunga* of the Kafirs, it is carried out by superstitious parents sometime after the birth. Nevertheless the custom cannot be universal, since the finger-joints are often to be found entire, and further there are no statements as to the reasons why girls seem to be more regularly subjected to the operation than boys."[1] To the same effect a French traveller of the eighteenth century, speaking of the Hottentots, affirms that "some of them superstitiously cut off a joint of their fingers in their infancy, imagining that after the operation the evil spirit has no more power over them."[2] And in agreement with both writers it is observed by a modern authority on the Hottentots that "the practice of cutting off a finger," as he calls it, "is done even to new-born children who are not a day old. As all sicknesses are expected to come from Gauna, or from his servants, the practitioners of witchcraft, it appears that this custom is a kind of sacrifice or offering to Gauna," an evil spirit who is supposed to cause the deaths of human beings, and whom accordingly the Hottentots try to propitiate by promises of offerings.[3] Among the Hill Damaras, a tribe who speak a Hottentot language but belong to a totally different race, it is customary to cut off the first joint of the little finger of the left hand of every child that is born, whether male or female; indeed, this mutilation is said to be the distinctive badge of the tribe.[4]

Sonnerat on the custom.

Th. Hahn on the custom.

Custom of mutilating the little finger among the Hill Damaras.

[1] Gustav Fritsch, *Die Eingeborenen Süd-Afrika's* (Breslau, 1872), pp. 332 *sq.*

[2] Sonnerat, *Voyage aux Indes Orientales et à la Chine* (Paris, 1782), ii. 93.

[3] Theophilus Hahn, *Tsuni-‖Goam, the Supreme Being of the Khoi-Khoi* (London, 1881), p. 87. As to Gauna, see *id.*, pp. 85 *sq.*

[4] J. Irle, *Die Herero* (Gütersloh, 1906), p. 155. According to this writer (p. 151), the Hill Damaras, though their language is Hottentot, differ as far from the Hottentots in colour, form, and mode of life as one race can differ from another; they are also quite distinct from the Bushmen, the Herero, and all the other Bantu tribes by whom they are surrounded, in fact they are pure negroes (p. 149). The absolute distinction of the Hill Damaras from the Hottentots, Herero, and Bushmen is maintained also by

From a comparison of these statements we may perhaps conclude that among the Hottentots a joint is often cut from the finger of a young child, whether male or female, for the purpose of prolonging its life, and that as children whose elder brothers or sisters have died are commonly believed to be peculiarly liable to die also, the mutilation is frequently, though by no means exclusively, performed on such children with the benevolent intention of saving their lives.

Conclusion as to Hottentot custom of mutilating the fingers.

Among the Bushmen the custom appears to be similar. Speaking of them, a French missionary writes that, "strangely enough, if a woman loses her first infant and gives birth to a second, she cuts off the tip of the little finger of the second child and throws it away." But he adds that, according to one of his converts, who had grown up among the Bushmen, the mutilation with some of them was "a badge of caste and therefore common to all their children."[1] In harmony with this latter statement is the account of the custom given by another authority on the Bushmen. "The custom of cutting off the first joint of the little finger was almost universal among the Bushman tribes. The operation was performed with a sharp stone, and they believed that by this act of self-mutilation they secured to themselves a long continued career of feasting after death. The 'Gariepean Bushmen have the following myth upon the subject: one of them stated that not only his own tribe, but many others also, believed that at some undefined spot on the banks of the Gariep, or Great river, there is a place called *'Too'ga*, to which after death they all will go; and that to ensure a safe journey thither they cut off the first joint of the little finger of the left, or right hand, one tribe adopting the one fashion, another the other. This they consider is a guarantee that they will be able to arrive there without difficulty, and that

Custom of cutting off the finger-joints of children among the Bushmen.

Gustav Fritsch (*Die Eingeborenen Süd-Afrikas*, pp. 211 *sqq.*). The view that the Hill Damaras are a negro people, and spoke a negro language before their contact with the Hottentots, was held also by Josaphat Hahn, who, however, confounds the Herero also with the Negroes ("Die Ovaherero," *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, iv. (1869) p. 229).

[1] T. Arbousset et F. Daumas, *Relation d'un Voyage d'Exploration au Nord-est de la Colonie du Cap de Bonne-Espérance* (Paris, 1842), p. 493.

upon their arrival they will be feasted with locusts and honey, whilst those who have neglected this rite will have to travel upon their heads, beset the entire distance with all kinds of imaginary obstacles and difficulties; and even after all their labour on arriving at the desired destination they will have nothing given to them but flies to live upon."[1] However, according to a native Bushman account, reported by Dr. W. H. I. Bleek, a writer of the highest authority on the Bushmen, the mutilation is not universal; it is inflicted on little children of both sexes, boys losing the top joint of the little finger of the right hand, and girls losing the corresponding joint of the left hand, but some boys and girls are not thus mutilated. The reason assigned by the native informant for thus mutilating the right hand of boys was that "they shoot with this hand"; though why some boys and girls should be exempt from the operation he does not explain. Further, he said that "the joint is cut off with reed. It is thought to make children live to grow up. It is done before they suck at all."[2] According to Theophilus Hahn, "the practice of cutting off a finger" of children before they are a day old is common to the Bushmen with the Hottentots and the Hill Damaras; but he does not tell us whether it is carried out on all the children or only on some.[3]

Conclusion as to Hottentot and Bushman custom of cutting off children's finger-joints.

From a comparison of these accounts we may conclude that among the Bushmen, as among the Hottentots, the practice of cutting off the joint of a young child's finger, whether boy or girl, is common but not universal, that it is believed to benefit the child in some way, whether in this world or in the next, and that the mutilation is inflicted particularly, though not exclusively, on a child whose elder

[1] George W. Stow, *The Native Races of South Africa* (London, 1905), p. 129. Elsewhere (p. 152) the same writer mentions a tribe of Bushmen, of whom every one had the first joint of the little finger cut off.

[2] *Specimens of Bushman Folk-lore*, collected by the late W. H. I. Bleek, Ph.D., and L. C. Lloyd (London, 1911), pp. 329-331; compare W. H. I. Bleek, *A Brief Account of Bushman Folk-lore* (London, 1875), p. 17. Of the Tati Bushmen, called Masarwas by the Bechuanas, we are told that "they never, to my knowledge, cut off the joints of the little fingers. None that I have examined were so mutilated, either amongst men or women. They, however, knew that it was a Bushman custom, and common amongst some tribes." See Rev. S. S. Dornan, "The Tati Bushmen (Masarwas) and their Language," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xlvii. (1917) p. 51.

[3] Theophilus Hahn, *Tsuni-‖Goam, the Supreme Being of the Khoi-Khoi* (London, 1881), p. 87.

brothers or sisters died in infancy with the hope of prolonging the life of the survivor.

Custom of cutting off finger-joints of children in the Gaboon and Madagascar.

A similar custom is said to be practised by the Ba-Bongo, a tribe in the upper valley of the Ogowe River, in the French Gaboon. When a firstborn child has died, a joint of the little finger is cut off the hand, not only of the next, but of all the children subsequently born in the family.[1] In Madagascar it would seem that a like mutilation has at least occasionally been resorted to for the purpose of saving the life or improving the prospects of a child; for we read of a certain man, afterwards a famous prime minister, who had had the first joints of the forefinger and little finger of his left hand amputated in infancy for the purpose of avoiding the evil fate under which he was supposed to have been born.[2] Nor has this cruel mutilation of infant hands been practised from kindly motives only by barbarous tribes of Africa and Madagascar. We are told that in Iceland in former times any woman who bit off her child's finger "in order that it might live longer," was punished only with a fine.[3]

Amputation of finger-joints among the aborigines of Australia.

Similar amputations of finger-joints have been customary among some of the aboriginal tribes on the coasts of New South Wales, Queensland, and the Northern Territory of South Australia, but the motive for the mutilation remains obscure; nowhere, apparently, is it said that the operation is designed to save the life of the child on whom it is performed. So far as appears, the mutilation was confined to women. For example, of the tribes which at the end of the eighteenth century occupied the territory about Port Jackson and Botany Bay we read that "the women are early subjected to an uncommon mutilation of the two first joints of the little finger of the left hand. This operation is performed when they are very young, and is done under an idea that these joints of the little finger are in the way when they wind their fishing-lines over the hand. Very few were

Custom of amputating the finger-joints of female children among the tribes on the coast of New South Wales and Queensland.

[1] Mgr. Le Roy "Les pygmées," in *Les Missions Catholiques*, xxix. (Lyons, 1897) p. 90. Mgr. Le Roy reports the custom on the evidence of a native traveller of Fernan-Vaz who had lived and traded among the Ba-Bongo.

[2] A. et G. Grandidier, *Ethnographie de Madagascar*, ii. (Paris, 1914) p. 277 (*Histoire Physique, Naturelle, et Politique de Madagascar*, vol. iv.).

[3] Max Bartels, "Isländischer Brauch und Volksglaube in Bezug auf die Nachkommenschaft," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, xxxii. (1900) p. 81, citing Olafsen as his authority.

to be met with who had not undergone this ceremony, and these appeared to be held in contempt."[1] The amputation was effected by tying a hair tightly round the finger so as to stop the circulation of the blood; as a consequence mortification set in and the joint dropped off.[2] To the same effect a voyager who visited the coast of New South Wales at the beginning of the nineteenth century tells us that among the natives, "whilst the female child is in its infancy, they deprive it of the two first joints of the little finger of the right hand; the operation being effected by obstructing the circulation by means of a tight ligature. The dismembered part is thrown into the sea, that the child may be hereafter fortunate in fishing."[3] In the Port Stephens tribe on the coast of New South Wales, "a mother amputates the little finger of the right hand of one of her female children as soon as it is born, in token of its appointment to the office of fisherwoman to the family."[4] Among the natives of Denwich Island, about forty-five miles south of Brisbane, the men gash their arms, legs, breast, and back with shells, in order to raise great scars, which they regard as ornamental. "As for the women, it is less the taste for ornament than the idea of a religious sacrifice which leads them to mutilate themselves. While they are still young, the end of the little finger of the left hand is tied up with cobwebs; the circulation of the blood being thus obstructed, after a few days the first joint is torn off and dedicated to the boa serpent, to fishes, or to kangaroos."[5] Again, in the coastal

The custom said to be intended to make the girl a good fisherwoman.

[1] Lieutenant-Colonel [David] Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, Second Edition (London, 1804), pp. 358 *sq.* The first edition of Collins's book was published in 1798. His statement has been reproduced more or less fully by later writers. See the following note.

[2] George Barrington, *The History of New South Wales* (London, 1802), pp. 11 *sq.* In other respects Barrington's account agrees with that of Collins. Their evidence is reproduced by J. Dumont D'Urville, *Voyage autour du Monde et à la recherche de la Pérouse* (Paris, 1832–1833), i. 406. Compare G. F. Angas, *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand* (London, 1847), ii. 225; J. D. Lang, *Queensland* (London, 1861), p. 344; R. Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria* (Melbourne and London, 1878), i. p. xxiii; Edward M. Curr, *The Australian Race* (Melbourne and London, 1886–1887), iii. 406.

[3] John Turnbull, *A Voyage round the World in the Years 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803 and 1804*, Second Edition (London, 1813), p. 100.

[4] Robert Dawson, quoted by A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* (London, 1904), p. 747.

[5] *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xvii. (Lyons, 1845) pp. 75 *sq.*

branch of the Turrbal tribe, which occupied the country in the neighbourhood of Brisbane, "each woman had the two joints of one little finger taken off, when a girl, by tying a cobweb round it. When the joint mortifies, the hand is held in an ant-bed for an hour or so, for the joint to be eaten off. This is the fishing branch of the tribe, and this is done to distinguish its women from those of the other branches. It is not done to give them any power of catching fish."[1] So in the Mooloola tribe, between Brisbane and Gympie, "mothers used to bind round, at the second joint, the little fingers of the left hands of their daughters when about ten years old with the coarse spiders' webs of their country, so as to stop circulation and cause the two joints to drop off."[2] The same custom obtained far along the coast of Queensland both north and south of Maryborough, where the mutilation is said to have always been confined to the women of the coast;[3] and as it has been recorded still farther north at Halifax Bay,[4] we may infer that the practice was in vogue among the tribes who occupied a great extent of the eastern seaboard of Australia. It is also found on the northern coast; for in the Larakia tribe, near Port Darwin, "the women have an extraordinary custom of mutilating the index finger of the left hand by removing the terminal joint. It is either bitten off by the mother at a very early age or, at a later time, cobweb is tied so tightly round that the circulation is prevented and then the joint rots off. The custom has nothing to do with initiation, and the natives have no idea of what it means."[5]

Amputation of finger-joints of female children in the Larakia tribe of the Northern Territory, Australia.

[1] A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, pp. 746 *sq.*

[2] R. Westaway, in E. M. Curr's *The Australian Race*, iii. 139.

[3] H. E. Aldridge, cited by A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 747.

[4] James Cassady, cited by E. M. Curr, *The Australian Race*, ii. 425, "The women have a joint of the first finger amputated, and it is noticeable that the same custom existed in the Sydney tribe, as well as in some of the southern portions of Queensland." For more evidence as to the prevalence of the custom among the tribes of Queensland, see E. M. Curr, *op. cit.* i. 73 *sq.*, ii. 425, iii. 119, 144, 223, 412; J. D. Lang, *Queensland*, p. 344; John Mathew, *Eaglehawk and Crow* (London, 1899), p. 120; *id.*, *Two Representative Tribes of Queensland* (London, 1910), p. 108.

[5] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia* (London, 1914), p. 10. Compare John Mathew, *Eaglehawk and Crow* (London, 1899), p. 120, "At the Daly River, in the Northern Territory, girls remove the first two joints of the right forefinger by tying round the joint a thin skein of strong cobweb, which is left until the joint falls off";

The custom of throwing the severed finger-joint into the sea to make the girl a good fisher-woman is parallel to the custom of throwing a child's navel-string into the sea for the same purpose.

Some of the reasons assigned for this particular mutilation in Australia can hardly be accepted as satisfactory. Few will believe that a woman can wind a fishing-line better if she lacks the first joint of the little finger of her left hand; nor is it probable that the amputation is performed simply for the purpose of distinguishing a fisherwoman, or, according to another account, the wife of a fisherman,[1] from other members of the tribe or community. Yet it is curious that the custom seems to be observed only by tribes who inhabit the coast; and if this limitation really holds good, it points to some connexion of the custom with the sea. A clue to the mystery is perhaps furnished by the statement that "the dismembered part is thrown into the sea, that the child may be hereafter fortunate in fishing";[2] for such a usage is parallel to the disposition which many tribes in many parts of the world make of the afterbirths and navel-strings of infants with the express intention of fitting the children for the careers which they are to follow in after life.[3] For example, some tribes of Western Australia believe that a man swims well or ill according as his mother at his birth threw his navel-string into water or not.[4] In some parts of Fiji, when a baby girl has been born, "the mother or her

E. M. Curr, *The Australian Race*, i. 252, "The Larrakia and Woolna tribes amputate some of the finger-joints." This last statement, made on the authority of Mr. Paul Foelsche, Inspector of Police, who resided for ten years in the Port Darwin District, probably applies only to the women. No authority, so far as I am aware, mentions that this particular mutilation was ever practised on Australian males. The severe mutilations which the men had to undergo at initiation were of different kinds and varied in different tribes. "The cutting off of the last joint of the little finger of females" is briefly mentioned as an Australian custom by Major T. L. Mitchell (*Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia*, Second Edition, London, 1839, ii. 345), but without indicating the motive or the district where the custom is observed.

[1] John F. Mann, "Notes on the Aborigines of Australia," *Proceedings of the Geographical Society of Australasia*, i. (Sydney, 1885) p. 39, "In the coast districts the betrothal of a young woman to a man who follows the occupation of a fisherman compels her to lose the first joint of the little finger of her left hand. This operation is performed by winding around the joint several turns of the strong cobweb or gossamer which is so frequently met with in the bush. This is a slow and very painful operation."

[2] Above, p. 204.

[3] For evidence, see *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, i. 182 *sqq.* (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part i.).

[4] G. F. Moore, *Descriptive Vocabulary of the Language in Common Use amongst the Aborigines of Western Australia*, p. 9 (published along with the author's *Diary of Ten Years' Eventful Life of an Early Settler in Western Australia*, London, 1884, but paged separately).

sister will take the navel-string to the sea-water when she goes out fishing for the first time after the childbirth, and she will throw it into the sea when the nets are stretched in line. Thus the girl will grow up into a skilful fisherwoman." [1] In the Gilbert Islands the navel-strings of children are preserved till the boy or girl has grown to be a lad or lass; then the lad's navel-string is carried out far to sea and thrown overboard, whereupon the people in the canoes, who take part in the ceremony, set themselves to catch as many fish as they can. On their return to land they are met by the old woman who helped at the lad's birth; the first fish caught is handed to her, and she carries it to the hut. The fish is laid on a new mat, the youth and his mother take their place beside it, and they and she are covered up with another mat. Finally, the old woman walks round the mat, striking the ground with a club and praying that the lad may be brave and invulnerable, and that he may turn out a skilful fisherman.[2] Among the Kwakiutl Indians of British Columbia the afterbirth of girls is buried at high-water mark, in the belief that this will render them expert at digging for clams.[3] On the other hand, if parents wish to make their son a good climber, they will hang his navel-string on a tree, with the notion that when he grows up he will thus be the better able to clamber up trees and fetch down their fruit. This is done for this avowed purpose by the natives of Ponape,[4] one of the Caroline Islands, and by the Kai and Yabim tribes of New Guinea.[5] With this intention the natives about Cape King William in northern New Guinea attach a young boy's navel-string to an arrow and shoot it up into a tree, where it remains hanging among the branches. This is done at the time when the boy begins to walk. "By that means the child is thought to be rendered capable of climbing trees, in order that he may afterwards be able to gather tree-fruits. Were that

Child's navel-string hung on a tree to make him a good climber.

[1] The Rev. Lorimer Fison, in a letter to me dated May 29, 1901.

[2] R. Parkinson, "Beiträge zur Ethnologie der Gilbertinsulaner," *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, ii. (1889) p. 35.

[3] Fr. Boas, in *Eleventh Report of the Committee on the North-Western Tribes of Canada*, p. 5 (separate reprint from the *Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Liverpool Meeting, 1896*).

[4] Dr. Hahl, "Mittheilungen über Sitten und rechtliche Verhältnisse auf Ponape," *Ethnologisches Notizblatt*, ii. Heft 2 (Berlin, 1901) p. 10.

[5] R. Neuhauss, *Deutsch Neu-Guinea*, iii. (Berlin, 1911) pp. 27, 296.

not done, the man would be merely 'one who lived upon the ground,' because his inward parts would be heavy."[1]

The Australian custom of amputating the finger-joints of female children and throwing them into the sea is a magical ceremony designed to make the girls good fisher-women.

In all such cases the intention seems to be to establish a harmony between the child and the sphere of his or her future activity, by depositing a portion of his or her person either in the sea or on a tree, according as the boy or girl is destined to become a fisher or a climber; for on the principles of sympathetic magic, which are assumed, though not defined, by all savages, the severed portions of a man's body remain, even after their severance, united with it so intimately that he feels everything done to them as if it were done to himself.[2] Thus the girl whose navel-string is thrown into the sea acquires, like it, a maritime character which will enable her to catch fish with ease; and a boy whose navel-string has been hung on a tree or shot up among the boughs, will acquire, so to say, an arboreal character which will enable him to swarm up trees and bring down coco-nuts and other fruits with the utmost agility. In the light of these parallels the Australian custom of amputating the finger-joints of girls and throwing them into the sea becomes intelligible; it is a magical ceremony designed, as an old voyager rightly affirmed,[3] to make the girls successful fisherwomen. At least this explanation appears more probable than the view of a Catholic missionary that the mutilation is a religious sacrifice, the severed joint being dedicated to serpents, fishes, or kangaroos;[4] for among the aborigines of Australia, while the practice of magic was universally prevalent, the rudiments of religion were rare.[5]

Amputation of finger-joints for other purposes in Africa.

Thus, if my interpretation of it is correct, the Australian custom of amputating a girl's finger to make her a good

[1] R. Neuhauss, *op. cit.* iii. 254.

[2] To give a single example; with the natives of Patiko, a district of the Uganda Protectorate, "a matter of supreme importance is the safe disposal of the umbilical cord, which in the hands of evilly disposed persons may be a potent source of danger. If the cord is found and burnt by an enemy of the family, the child is bound to die, so the mother is careful to bury it in some obscure place away in the jungle; for any one to be suspected of searching for the hiding-place is tantamount to being suspected of attempted murder" (Rev. A. L. Kitching, *On the Backwaters of the Nile*, London, 1912, p. 169).

[3] John Turnbull. See above, p. 204.

[4] Above, p. 204.

[5] Compare *Totemism and Exogamy*, i. 141 *sqq.*; John Mathew, *Two Representative Tribes of Queensland* (London, 1910), pp. 167 *sqq.*

fisherwoman differs essentially from the reported African practice of amputating a finger-joint of a child, whose elder brothers or sisters have died, for the sake of saving the infant's life. The truth appears to be that, like many other usages which resemble each other superficially, the custom of mutilating the hand by removing some of the finger-joints has been observed by different peoples, and even apparently by the same people, from a variety of motives. For example, we are told of the Bushmen that "at every distemper which they experience they are wont to cut off the joint of a finger, beginning with the little finger of the left hand as the least useful; their notion in undergoing the operation is to allow the morbid principle to flow away with the blood shed from the wound."[1] Similarly among the Namaquas, a Hottentot tribe, when a person is ill the sorcerer sometimes "cuts off the first joint of the little finger of his patient, pretending that the disease will go out with the blood. Of this we had evident proof in the number of persons whom we saw who had lost the first, and even the second, joint of the little finger."[2] So, too, a traveller in South Africa in the first quarter of the nineteenth century says that "the greater part of the Corannas had a joint taken from their little finger, which is done with a sharp stone. This operation is performed merely for the purpose of bleeding, in order to remove some pain."[3] Again, a traveller among the Hill Damaras noticed that some of the women "had lost two joints of one of their little fingers, which they said they had got cut off when they themselves had been sick, or their children had been ill."[4] With regard to the Kafirs, we are informed that "in cases of debility in the muscles of the hand or fingers, they are accustomed to cut off the first joint of the little finger."[5] The Damaras "cut off the last joint of the little finger, to give the child extra strength. Even in later life a Kafir will sometimes mutilate his little finger if he finds his

South African custom of amputating finger-joints as a cure of sickness.

[1] L. Degrandpré, *Voyage à la Côte Occidentale d'Afrique* (Paris, 1801), ii. 93 *sq.*; John Barrow, *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa* (London, 1801), i. 289.

[2] Barnabas Shaw, *Memorials of South Africa* (London, 1840), p. 43.

[3] Rev. John Campbell, *Travels in South Africa, Second Journey* (London, 1822), i. 48.

[4] Sir James Edward Alexander, *Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa* (London, 1838), ii. 135.

[5] George Thompson, *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa* (London, 1827), ii. 357.

hand growing weak: he thinks this adds to its strength."[1] The account which Mr. Dudley Kidd elsewhere gives of this Kafir practice appears to show that in some cases at least it flows from a magical superstition. "It is a common custom," he says, "in some tribes to cut off a joint of a finger, generally the little finger; the blood is caught on a cake of cowdung, and the amputated joint is then hidden in the cowdung and plastered up in the roof of the hut for luck. This ceremony counteracts the evil magic of enemies."[2]

Washamba custom of amputating finger-joints in various circumstances.

Among the Washamba of East Africa, "when a mother feared that her son or daughter was about to suffer from leucoma, she would cause the tip of her own little finger to be cut off, and would allow the blood to drip on the ailing eye. When a man's hut collapsed over his head, and he escaped without injury, the tip of his last finger was cut off and buried and a goat was afterwards sacrificed."[3] In these latter cases it is evident that the motives which prompt the amputation are superstitious, not medical. No rational explanation can be given of the practice of cutting off a piece of a man's finger when his house has tumbled down on him and he himself has escaped without a scratch; and it would puzzle the College of Surgeons to say how you can cure leucoma in a person's eye by cutting off a piece of another person's finger. This latter mutilation, and the statement of the Hill Damara women that they had amputated joints of their own fingers when their children were ill,[4] introduce us to quite a different class of mutilations of the hand, that is, to mutilations which are performed, not for the benefit of the sufferer, but for the benefit of somebody else. If a faint colour of rationalism could be imparted to the practice of mutilating the hands of men and women for their own benefit by alleging, for instance, that "the morbid principle" ran away with the blood, no such tinge can disguise the naked superstition of mangling one person's hand to benefit another. Yet that strange superstition has found great favour with some races. Thus in regard to the Tonga or Friendly Islands, as they were at the beginning of the

Amputation of finger-joints for the benefit of other people.

[1] Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), p. 203.

[2] Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir*, p. 262.

[3] A. Karasek, "Beiträge zur Kenntniss der Waschambaa," *Baessler-Archiv*, i. (Leipsic and Berlin, 1911) p. 171.

[4] Above, p. 209.

nineteenth century, we are told that "nothing is more common in these islands than the sacrifice of a little finger on occasion of the illness of a superior relation: insomuch that there is scarcely a grown-up person (unless a very great chief, who can have but few superior relations) but who has lost the little finger of both hands. Nor is there ever any dispute between two persons with a view to get exempt from this ceremony; on the contrary, Mr. Mariner has witnessed a violent contest between two children of five years of age, each claiming the favour of having the ceremony performed on him, so little do they fear the pain of the operation."[1] The amputation was usually performed with a knife, axe, or sharp stone, the finger being laid flat on a block of wood and the joint severed with the help of a powerful blow of a mallet or heavy stone.[2] On one occasion in Tonga, when a sacred chief was seriously ill, "every day one or other of his young relations had a little finger cut off, as a propitiatory offering to the gods for the sins of the sick man. These sacrifices, however, were found of no avail; greater, therefore, were soon had recourse to: and accordingly three or four children were strangled, at different times."[3] From this account it clearly appears that in Tonga the amputation of finger-joints in such cases was a purely religious ceremony, the sacrifice being offered to propitiate the gods and so induce them to spare the life of the sick person. This propitiatory or atoning intention of the rite is brought out no less distinctly in the account of a somewhat later, but still early, observer of Tongan manners and religion. "The infliction of injuries upon themselves was another mode in which they worshipped their gods. It was a frequent practice with the Sandwich Islanders, in performing some of their rites, to knock out their front teeth; and the Friendly Islanders, to cut off one or two of the bones

Amputation of finger-joints for the benefit of sick relatives in the Tonga Islands.

The amputation was a sacrifice offered to the gods for the purpose of inducing them to spare the sick person.

[1] William Mariner, *An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands*, Second Edition (London, 1818), i. 439 note*; compare *id.*, ii. 210 *sq.*, "*Tooto-nima*, or cutting off a portion of the little finger, as a sacrifice to the gods, for the recovery of a superior sick relation. This is very commonly done; so that there is scarcely a person living at the Tonga islands but who has lost one or both, or a considerable portion of both little fingers." Mariner spent four years with the natives of the Tonga Islands at a time when their customs and beliefs were quite unaffected by European influence. His account of them is one of the best descriptions we possess of a savage people.

[2] William Mariner, *op. cit.* ii. 211.

[3] William Mariner, *op. cit.* i. 438 *sq.*

of their little fingers. This, indeed, was so common that scarce an adult could be found who had not in this way mutilated his hands. On one occasion the daughter of a chief, a fine young woman about eighteen years of age, was standing by my side, and as I saw by the state of the wound that she had recently performed the ceremony, I took her hand, and asked her why she had cut off her finger? Her affecting reply was, that her mother was ill, and that, fearful lest her mother should die, she had done this to induce the gods to save her. 'Well,' I said, 'how did you do it?' 'Oh,' she replied, 'I took a sharp shell, and worked it about till the joint was separated, and then I allowed the blood to stream from it. This was my offering to persuade the gods to restore my mother.' When, at a future period, another offering is required, they sever the second joint of the same finger; and when a third or a fourth is demanded, they amputate the same bones of the other little finger; and when they have no more joints which they can conveniently spare, they rub the stumps of their mutilated fingers with rough stones, until the blood again streams from the wound."[1]

Amputation of finger-joints for the benefit of sick relatives in Fiji and Futuna.

A similar mutilation was practised for similar reasons by the natives of Viti-Levu, one of the Fijian Islands. "If they see their father or mother in danger of death, they do not hesitate to cut off the first joint of their ring finger to appease the wrath of their divinities. But if after this first offering the health of the patient is not restored, they mutilate themselves again and cut another joint at each crisis, amputating successively all their fingers and even the wrist, persuaded that after this last stroke the vengeance of the gods will be satisfied, and that the cure will be infallible. It is ordinarily with a sharp stone or simple

[1] John Williams, *Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands* (London, 1838), pp. 470 *sq.* The writer joined the mission of the London Missionary Society in the Pacific in the year 1817 (*op. cit.* p. 14). The custom was still in full vogue at the time of Dumont D'Urville's visit to the islands; he observed that women were oftener subjected than men to this barbarous mutilation, the religious intention of which he confirms. See J. Dumont D'Urville, *Voyage autour du Monde et à la recherche de la Pérouse* (Paris, 1832–1833), iv. 71 *sq.* The practice lingered on as late at least as the fifties of the nineteenth century. See Father Jerome Grange in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xvii. (Lyons, 1845) p. 12; *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, xxii. (1852) p. 115; J. E. Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise among the Islands of the Western Pacific* (London, 1853), p. 123.

shell that they perform this cruel operation on themselves. Almost all the savages I saw at Viti-Levu were deprived of one or two fingers."[1] Here also, therefore, the mutilation was purely religious and not magical. Similarly among the natives of Futuna, one of the New Hebrides, "in shaking hands with these poor people, one notices almost always that they have lost one or more finger-joints. In the time of heathendom, on occasion of the sickness or death of their relations, the custom was thus to mutilate the children in order to appease the wrath of the gods."[2] That the mutilation of the children in all these cases was a substitute for putting them to death is strongly suggested by the Tongan case, in which, when the amputation of children's fingers failed to cure a sick chief, the strangling of a few others was adopted as a more effective mode of ensuring the divine favour.[3] The custom of sacrificing children in order to save the life of sick adults was not unknown in the Solomon Islands; the spirit who was supposed to be afflicting the patient was invited to take the child and spare the man.[4]

Amputation of finger-joints as a religious rite in the Morasu caste of Mysore. Early accounts of the custom.

Another example of the mutilation of the hand as a religious rite performed for the benefit of others is furnished by a practice of the Morasu caste in Mysore, a province of Southern India. A principal object of worship with the caste "is an image called Kala-Bhairava, which signifies the black dog. The temple is at Sitibutta, near Calanore, about three cosses east from hence. The place being very dark, and the votaries being admitted no farther than the door, they are not sure of the form of the image; but believe that it represents a man on horseback. The god is supposed to be one of the destroying powers, and his wrath is appeased by bloody sacrifices. . . . At this temple

[1] Letter of the missionary Chevron, dated 4th January 1840, in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xiv. (Lyons, 1842) p. 192.

[2] Letter of the missionary Poupinel, dated 15th June 1858, in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xxxii. (Lyons, 1860) pp. 95 *sq.*

[3] Above, p. 211.

[4] George Brown, D.D., *Melanesians and Polynesians* (London, 1910), pp. 394 *sq.* In Goodenough Island, to the south-east of New Guinea, Dr. Brown noticed "the custom of amputating a joint or joints from the fingers of relatives whenever any of their friends were sick. At a village called Iakalova we saw people whose hands had been thus mutilated—one woman having one or two joints removed from her first, third, and fourth fingers; many others, including mere children, were thus disfigured" (*op. cit.* p. 394).

a very singular offering is made. When a woman is from fifteen to twenty years of age, and has borne some children, terrified lest the angry deity should deprive her of her infants, she goes to the temple, and, as an offering to appease his wrath, cuts off one or two of her fingers of the right hand."[1] The earliest account of this custom with which I am acquainted is contained in the letter of a Catholic missionary written in or about the year 1714. He says, "I ought not to omit a very extraordinary custom, which is observed nowhere but among those who belong to the caste of which I speak. When the first child of a family marries, the mother is obliged to cut off, with a pair of carpenter's shears, the first two joints of the two last fingers of the hand; and this custom is so indispensable that failure to comply with it involves degradation and expulsion from the caste. The wives of the princes are privileged and may dispense with it on condition that they offer two fingers of gold."[2] Some years later another Catholic missionary described the practice of the caste as follows: "There obtains here a very extraordinary custom in the caste of labourers. When they are about to have their ears pierced or be married, they are obliged to have two fingers of the hand cut off and to present them to the idol. That day they go to the temple as it were in triumph. There, in the presence of the idol, they clip off their fingers with a snip of the scissors and immediately apply fire to stanch the bleeding. A person is dispensed from this ceremony on presenting two golden fingers to the divinity."[3]

[1] Francis Buchanan, "Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar," ch. v., in John Pinkerton's *General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London, 1808–1814), viii. 661. The temple stands on a small rocky hill called Sidhî Betta (*betta* = hill), about twelve miles from Kolar in the Mysore State. See Fred. Fawcett, "On the Berulu Kodo, a Sub-Sect of the Moras Vokaligaru of the Mysore Province," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, i. 458.

[2] "Lettre du Pere le Gac, Missionnaire de la Compagnie de Jesus," *Lettres Édifiantes et Curieuses*, Nouvelle Édition, xii. (Paris, 1781) p. 371. The letter is not dated, but it contains a narrative of events from 1710 to 1714 based on the writer's personal knowledge (pp. 314, 369). Father le Gac was stationed at Devandapallé (p. 313), which is probably identical with the fort of Devanahalli, which figures in the history of the Morasu caste. See H. V. Nanjundayya, *The Ethnographical Survey of Mysore*, xv. *Morasu Okkalu* (Bangalore, 1908), pp. 3 *sq.*

[3] "Lettre du Pere le Caron, Missionnaire de la Compagnie de Jesus," *Lettres Édifiantes et Curieuses*, Nouvelle

Persistence of the custom of amputation during the nineteenth century.

This barbarous custom persisted till far on in the nineteenth century and has been described in more detail by writers of that period. It was not confined to Mysore, but was practised by the Morasu caste in various parts of the Madras Presidency, particularly in Cuddapah, North Arcot, and Salem.[1] Down to about 1888 middle-aged and elderly women of the caste who had been deprived of the last joints of the third and fourth fingers of the right hand might be seen any day in the streets of Bangalore, though the amputation had been forbidden by the Commissioner of Mysore about twenty years earlier.[2] The Morasu caste belongs to the Dravidian stock; some of them speak the Canarese and others the Telugu language. The Morasu Okkalu, a section of whom observed the custom in question, are nearly confined to the eastern part of Mysore and the adjoining British territory. They are, and appear always to have been, an agricultural people.[3]

Various accounts of the custom.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century the French Abbé J. A. Dubois recorded that "to the east of Mysore there exists a tribe known under the name of Morsa-hokeula-makulou, in which, when a mother of a family gives her eldest daughter in marriage, she is obliged to undergo the amputation of two joints of the middle and ring fingers of the right hand. If the girl's mother is dead, the mother of the bridegroom, or, failing her, one of the nearest female relations, is

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Édition, xiii. (Paris, 1781) p. 203. The letter is dated "De la Mission de Carnate, aux Indes; ce 20 Novembre 1720." The writer refers to missions established at Ballabaram (p. 200) and Devandapallé (p. 219), towns which are repeatedly referred to by Father le Gac in the letter I have cited (*Lettres Édifiantes et Curieuses*, xii. 316, 317, 334, 336, 340, 354, 370, 371, etc.); so it seems clear that the two missionaries refer to the practice of the same caste, though neither of them mentions the name Morasu.

[1] Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), v. 76.

[2] Fred. Fawcett, "On the Berulu Kodo, a Sub-Sect of the Moras Vokaligaru of the Mysore Province," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, i. 449 *sq.* In this paper (pp. 449-474), which was read before the Anthropological Society of Bombay in September 1888, Mr. F. Fawcett gives a full account of the custom based on his personal inquiries and accompanied by extracts from earlier works. Compare Edgar Thurston, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* (Madras, 1906), pp. 390-396; *id.*, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), v. 73-80; H. V. Nanjundayya, *The Ethnographical Survey of Mysore*, xv. *Morasu Okkalu* (Bangalore, 1908), pp. 5, 8-12.

[3] H. V. Nanjundayya, *The Ethnographical Survey of Mysore*, xv. *Morasu Okkalu* (Bangalore, 1908), pp. 2 *sq.*

bound to submit to this cruel mutilation."[1] Down to 1883 at least the practice in the Salem district of the Madras Presidency was that "when a grandchild is born in a family, the eldest son of the grandfather, with his wife, appears at the temple for the ceremony of boring the child's ear, and there the woman has the last two joints of the third and fourth fingers chopped off. It does not signify whether the father of the first grandchild born be the eldest son or not, as in any case it is the wife of the eldest son who has to undergo the mutilation. After this, when children are born to other sons, their wives in succession undergo the operation. When a child is adopted, the same course is pursued."[2]

Another report of this remarkable practice runs as follows: "A peculiar custom prevails among one branch of the Morasu Wakaligas, by which the women suffer amputation of the ring and little fingers of the right hand. Every woman of the sect, previous to piercing the ears of her eldest daughter preparatory to her being betrothed in marriage, must necessarily undergo this mutilation, which is performed by the blacksmith of the village for a regulated fee by a surgical process sufficiently rude. The finger to be amputated is placed on a block, and the blacksmith places a chisel over the articulation of the joint and chops it off at a single blow. If the girl to be betrothed is motherless, and the mother of the boy has not been before subjected to the operation, it is incumbent on her to perform the sacrifice."[3]

F. Fawcett's account of the custom.

But the fullest account of the custom has been given by Mr. Fred. Fawcett, Officiating Superintendent of Police at Bangalore, from inquiries which he made among women, who had undergone the amputation, and among senior men of the caste, who were acquainted with the custom before it had been modified by European influence. He tells us that

[1] J. A. Dubois, *Mœurs, Institutions et Cérémonies des Peuples de l'Inde* (Paris, 1825), i. 5 *sq.*

[2] *Manual of the Salem District* (1883), quoted by Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), v. 76. To the same effect Mr. Thurston here quotes from the *Census Report* of 1891 as follows: "There is a sub-section of them called Veralu Icche Kāpulu, or Kāpulu who give the fingers, from a curious custom which requires that, when a grandchild is born in a family, the wife of the eldest son of the grandfather must have the last two joints of the third and fourth fingers of her right hand amputated at a temple of Bhairava."

[3] *Mysore and Coorg Gazette*, i. 338, quoted by Fred. Fawcett, *op. cit.* p. 474.

"before the ears and noses of children born in this sub-sect of the ryot caste were pierced (for ear-rings and other ornaments), the performance of certain ceremonies was obligatory. In one of these, the last, or ungual phalanx of the third and fourth fingers of the mother's right hand were amputated. This was done on no other occasion, so far as I can discover. Performance of the ceremonies on account of every individual born in the caste was absolutely necessary. There was no restriction as to the age within which the ceremonies for male children should be performed, but performance of them before marriage was obligatory. For female children they were performed before puberty. If they were not, the girls were unfit for marriage, and (as my chief authority asserts) by the caste rules 'their eyes should be sewn up and they should be turned adrift in the jungle.' By this figurative expression he probably meant, as they would not be fit for marriage, they would be good for nothing, and no more account should be taken of them. After they have arrived at puberty, the ceremonies could not be performed for them. The ceremonies for children who had lost their mothers were performed by one of the female relatives of the father—not of the mother. The ceremonies were usually performed before the children were eight years old. The ceremonies were performed by each Daiyádi or family every few years, for all the young children in the Daiyádi at the same time. Mothers brought all their young children, and children who were motherless were brought to the place where the Daiyádi collected for the purpose of performing the ceremonies. The village of the senior or head-man of the Daiyádi, who was the high priest of the occasion, was usually selected."[1]

The occasion of the amputation.

The amputation of the finger-joints, with the attendant ceremonies, could only take place in the first month of the Hindoo year. If any member of the family died in that month before the performance of the rite, the ceremonies had to be postponed to the same month of the following year. They were regularly preceded by a fast of several

The season of the amputation.

[1] Fred. Fawcett, "On the Berulu Kodo, a Sub-Sect of the Moras Vokaligaru of the Mysore Province," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, I. 450 *sq.*

Preliminary worship of Dháná Dévurú at two sacred trees.

days and the worship of a mysterious deity named Dháná Dévurú, who is unknown to the Hindoo pantheon. The worship was offered at two sacred trees, a peepul tree (*Ficus religiosa*) and a neem tree, growing close together and surrounded by a raised platform, on which were set upright stones with the figures of snakes carved on them in low relief. Such pairs of trees, so surrounded, are very common in this part of India; the trees have been regularly married to each other, and the places where they grow are sacred. The peepul tree (*Ficus religiosa*) is worshipped by women who desire to obtain offspring. On the occasion when they were to suffer the amputation of their finger-joints the mothers of the children brought new cloths, laid them on the platform, and fed the sacred snake with milk, melted butter, plantains, and so forth. If there was no snake, they pressed the food into a hole. A fowl too was killed; and by some people small pieces of gold and silver to represent snakes were put into the snake's hole, but by other people this offering was omitted. The cloths were afterwards removed from the platform and worn. However, the rites varied somewhat in different families. Some people did not worship at the trees, but performed all the ceremonies in the house.[1]

The scene of the amputation and the procession to it.

When these preliminaries had been duly observed for two or more days, the culminating rite of the amputation took place on a Sunday. Early on the morning of the day a row of small temples, one for each child, was made out of green branches in an open field or, according to others, in a grove near the village. Carts of the old-fashioned type, with wheels consisting each of a single flat piece of wood, were washed and cleaned the same morning, and having been covered with clean white cloth, ornamented with saffron, they were yoked to bullocks or other cattle. There was one such cart for each child. Accompanied by these bullock-drawn carts, parents and children walked together to the little leafy temples, the father and mother carrying on their heads brass vessels which contained a small cocoa-nut, betel leaves, saffron, water, flowers, and so forth. These vessels were sacred, being deemed emblems of Bhaîrî Dévurú,

[1] Fred. Fawcett, *op. cit.* pp. 451-453, 457 *sq.*

the god who was invoked at the amputation, and who seems to be the great god Siva in one of his fierce moods.[1] Every child who was old enough to do so carried one of these emblems on its head. Some say the children rode in the carts, which otherwise were empty. Clean cloths were spread on the ground the whole way from the village to the little temples, and on these cloths the parents and children walked.

The amputation of the finger-joints of the mothers and the piercing of the ears of the children.

On reaching the little verdant shrines in the field or the grove, the parents laid down in front of them the emblems of Bhaîrî Dévurú which they had carried on their heads, husband and wife depositing the emblems in front of the same temple. The head-man then put five, seven, or nine clean stones of any kind in each temple and rubbed saffron on each stone. If a Brahman happened to be present, he would be called on to hold the religious service and to consecrate the temples; in his absence these functions devolved on the head-man. The mothers then sat down in front of the temples, facing east. A goldsmith thereupon went to each of them in turn, and while a male member of the family held the woman's hand palm downward on a board, the goldsmith nipped off first the last joint of the third finger and then the last joint of the fourth finger with a sharp chisel. As each woman was operated on, she stood up, and the man who held her hand, without letting it go, plunged the raw and bleeding ends of the fingers into boiling oil. The fingers were then dressed with saffron and tied up with a cloth. In fifteen or twenty days the dressing was removed. The amputated finger-joints were put into a snake's hole as an offering to Dháná Dévurú. Some say they were put into any snake's hole; at any rate they were always stowed away in a snake's hole without ceremony by anybody. When the operation had been performed on all the women, sheep or goats were sacrificed to Bhaîrî Dévurú in front of the little leafy temples, one for each child. All this time the carts, from which the bullocks had not been unyoked, stood at a short distance in front of the little temples; but no sooner had the sheep been sacrificed than

[1] H. V. Nanjundayya, *The Ethnographical Survey of Mysore*, xv. *Morasu Okkalu* (Bangalore, 1908), p. 8.

the carts were driven back to the village. The people followed them after an interval, carrying the god's emblems on their heads as before. In the evening they feasted on the sacrificed sheep, and any one was free to partake of the banquet. The ceremony over, no more account was taken of the little temples. Next day the children, whose ears were to be pierced, were made to sit on a board placed on the ground in the yard of the head-man's house. Members of the family brought fruits and so forth, and put them into the children's cloths, which were spread out in front of them. Also the children were sprinkled with *tîrtham*, and a jasmine flower was inserted in the ear of each of them by the head-man. This concluded the ceremonies. Afterwards the children's ears might be pierced at any time and by anybody.[1]

Substitutes for the amputation of finger-joints.

Since the amputation of the finger-joints has been forbidden, it has been replaced by various substitutes, some of which illustrate the transition from a real to a symbolic sacrifice. For example, some women twist gold wire in the shape of rings round their fingers, and the operator, instead of chopping off the fingers, simply removes and appropriates the rings.[2] Others content themselves with putting on a gold or silver thimble, which is pulled off instead of the finger.[3] Others stick gold or silver coins by means of flour paste to their finger-tips, and then draw them off in like manner. Others again tie flowers round the fingers which used to be amputated, and then go through a pantomime of cutting off the joints by applying a chisel to them, only, however, to remove it without inflicting a scratch. Finally, others merely offer small pieces of gold or silver as substitutes for the amputation. In other respects the ceremonies continue to be observed in the old way.[4]

[1] Fred. Fawcett, *op. cit.* pp. 454-457. According to another account the severed finger-joints were thrown, not into a serpent's hole, but into an ant-hill. See V. N. Narasimmiyengar, "Marasa Vakkaligaru of Maisúr," *The Indian Antiquary*, ii. (1873) p. 51; Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, v. 78; *id.*, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* (Madras, 1906), p. 394; H. V. Nanjundayya, *Ethnographical Survey of Mysore*, xv. *Morasu Okkalu* (Bangalore, 1908), p. 11.

[2] V. N. Narasimmiyengar, "Marasa Vakkaligaru of Maisúr," *The Indian Antiquary*, ii. (1873) p. 52; Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, v. 77.

[3] Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, v. 80.

[4] Fred. Fawcett, *op. cit.* p. 457.

A legend told to account for the origin of the custom runs thus. By the practice of religious austerities a certain giant or demon (*rakshasa*) obtained from the great god Mahadeva or Siva the valuable privilege of immediately reducing to ashes any person on whose head he laid his right hand. Armed with this formidable power the ungrateful giant attempted to put it to the test by laying his impious hand on his benefactor Siva himself. The great god fled in terror, and after vainly attempting to conceal himself in a castor-oil plantation, he contrived to elude his pursuer by taking refuge in the red gourd of a certain shrub (*Linga-tonde*), which to this day bears a singular resemblance to the deity's characteristic emblem. As he peered about in search of the divine fugitive, the giant perceived a Morasu man at work in a neighbouring field, and asked him if he had seen the runaway. Afraid alike to incur the wrath of the god and to excite the rage of the giant, the prudent peasant said nothing, but pointed silently with his forefinger to the bush in which the mighty god was secreted. At that critical moment the great god Vishnu came to the rescue of his brother deity by assuming the likeness of a lovely maid, whose charms created so seasonable a diversion that the giant, in a moment of forgetfulness, laid his hand on his own head and was, of course, instantly consumed to ashes. Emerging from the bush, Siva was about to take summary vengeance on the peasant by cutting off the peccant finger which had betrayed the hiding-place of the deity, when the man's wife threw herself at the feet of the justly incensed divinity, represented to him the certain ruin which would befall her family if her husband were disabled from working at the farm, and besought the god to accept two of her own fingers instead of her husband's one. Pleased with this proof of conjugal affection, Siva consented to the exchange, and ordained that her female posterity in all future generations should sacrifice two fingers as a memorial of the transaction and of their devotion to his worship.[1]

Legend told to explain the origin of the custom of amputation in the Morasu caste.

[1] V. N. Narasimmyengar, "Marasa Vakkaligaru of Maisúr," *The Indian Antiquary*, ii. (1873) pp. 50 *sq.*; Fred. Fawcett, *op. cit.* pp. 472 *sq.*; Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, v. 76 *sq.*; H. V. Nanjundayya, *The Ethnographical Survey of Mysore*, xv. *Morasu Okkalu* (Bangalore, 1908), pp. 8 *sq.*

The amputation of the mother's finger-joints is perhaps a sacrifice to induce the gods to spare the life of her child.

The legend sheds little or no light on the origin of the custom. If we ask why a mother should have two finger-joints amputated before the ears of her children are pierced as a preliminary to marriage, the only plausible answer suggested in the preceding accounts is the one indicated by Buchanan, namely that the woman offers the finger-joints to the god in order to induce him to spare the life of her children.[1] On this view the cruel deity accepts the sacrifice as a substitute for the death of a human being; though why the sacrifice should be required of a mother as an indispensable condition to her piercing the ears of her offspring, it is difficult to perceive. Here again we are brought face to face with that problem of the mutilation of the ears from which we started. Can it be that the piercing of the ears is itself a sacrifice to propitiate some hostile power and persuade him to acquiesce in this trifling mutilation instead of exacting the life of the mutilated person? On this view the piercing of the child's ears and the mutilating of the mother's hand are both sacrifices designed to ensure the preservation of a woman's offspring. If that is so, the mutilation of a mother's hand in India to save her daughter's life presents a curious parallel to the similar mutilation of a daughter's hand in Tonga to save the life of her mother;[2] and in general the Indian practice of mothers submitting to the amputation of finger-joints for the benefit of their children presents an exact counterpart to the Tongan and Fijian practice of children submitting to the same operation for the benefit of their parents or other elderly relations. The similarity of the two customs favours the hypothesis that they admit of a similar explanation. To the meaning of the mutilation of the ears we shall return later on. Meanwhile it will be well to pursue the subject of the mutilation of the hand by noticing some other cases of that extraordinary custom.

The piercing of the ears may also be a sacrifice to save the child's life.

The sacrifice of finger-joints in sickness in the Tonga Islands.

When Captain Cook first visited the Tonga or Friendly Islands in the Pacific, he noticed that the greater part of the natives, both men and women, had lost one or both of their little fingers. "We endeavoured," he says, "but in vain, to find out the reason of this mutilation; for no one would

[1] Above, p. 214.

[2] Above, p. 212.

take any pains to inform us. It was neither peculiar to rank, age, or sex; nor is it done at any certain age, as I saw those of all ages on whom the amputation had been just made; and, except some young children, we found few who had both hands perfect. As it was more common among the aged than the young, some of us were of opinion that it was occasioned by the death of their parents, or some other near relation. But Mr. Wales one day met with a man, whose hands were both perfect, of such an advanced age, that it was hardly possible his parents could be living."[1] However, on a later visit to the islands Captain Cook learned "that this operation is performed when they labour under some grievous disease, and think themselves in danger of dying. They suppose that the Deity will accept of the little finger, as a sort of sacrifice efficacious enough to procure the recovery of their health. They cut it off with one of their stone hatchets. There was scarcely one in ten of them whom we did not find thus mutilated, in one or both hands; which has a disagreeable effect, especially as they cut so close, that they encroach upon the bone of the hand which joins to the amputated finger."[2] According to this account, the amputation of a sick man's finger-joint was a religious sacrifice which the patient offered in the hope that the deity would spare his life, accepting the finger-joint as a substitute for the whole man. The account is not necessarily inconsistent with that of later and probably better informed observers, who tell us that in Tonga such sacrifices of finger-joints were offered vicariously by children and young people to procure the recovery of elder relations.[3] Both customs may have been in vogue; a sick man who could

[1] *The Voyages of Captain James Cook Round the World* (London, 1809), iii. 204.

[2] *The Voyages of Captain James Cook Round the World* (London, 1809), v. 421 *sq.* The writer adds in a footnote, "It may be proper to mention here, on the authority of Captain King, that it is common for the inferior people to cut off a joint of their little finger, on account of the sickness of the chiefs to whom they belong." As to these vicarious sacrifices of finger-joints, see above, pp. 210 *sq.* Captain Cook's explanation of the custom agrees with that of the later French voyager, Labillardière, who says of the Tongans that their men, "like the women, have the habit of cutting off one or two joints of the little finger, and sometimes of the ring finger, in the hope of curing themselves of serious maladies." See Labillardière, *Relation du Voyage à la recherche de la Pérouse* (Paris, 1800), ii. 176.

[3] See above, pp. 210 *sq.*

induce or compel somebody else to mutilate himself on his behalf would be under a strong temptation to make the painful sacrifice vicariously rather than in his own person; but if he had none from whom he could exact this token of affection, he might very well, with the fear of death before his eyes, consent to have the operation performed on himself. In either case, according to our authorities, the amputation bore the character of a religious sacrifice offered to a god, who was believed to accept the finger-joint instead of a human life.

The sacrifice of finger-joints among the Mandan Indians.

The amputation of finger-joints as a religious sacrifice appears to have been not uncommon in some tribes of North American Indians. Every year the Mandan Indians held a great religious festival, at which young men, who were about to be admitted to the rank of warriors, submitted to a series of excruciating tortures in a special hut called the Medicine Lodge. They were hung from the roof by cords fastened to splints, which were inserted through their flesh, and in this painful posture they were made to revolve till they swooned away. Afterwards, on being lowered to the ground and released from the cords, each candidate, as he recovered his senses, dragged himself to another part of the lodge, where an Indian sat waiting for him, with a hatchet in his hand and a dried buffalo skin before him. There the young man, holding up the little finger of his left hand to the Great Spirit, in the most earnest and humble manner, expressed to the spirit his willingness to give it as a sacrifice; then he laid his finger on the buffalo skull, and the other chopped it off with a blow of the hatchet. Some of the candidates, immediately after the amputation of the little finger, presented with a similar speech the forefinger of the same hand to be amputated also, thus remaining with only the thumb and the two middle fingers of the left hand, which were deemed absolutely essential for holding the bow. Indeed, some men went further and sacrificed also the little finger of the right hand, which was thought to be a much greater sacrifice than the amputation of both the others.[1]

[1] George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, Fourth Edition (London, 1844), i. 156, 170-172.

The sacrifice of finger-joints among the Crow, Arikara, and Assiniboin Indians.

Among the Crow Indians in like manner finger-joints were cut off as a religious offering when they held what they called a Medicine Lodge, which was a great ceremony of their religion. It is said that in a basket hung up in a Medicine Lodge as many as fifty or even a hundred finger-joints have been collected on such an occasion.[1] In the Arikara tribe of Indians it was customary for warriors to practise austerities and to submit to torture before they set out on the war-path. They fasted rigorously for four days; they had incisions made in their backs, passed wooden skewers through the flesh, and suspended themselves by thongs from a post over a deep ravine; often, too, they cut off one or two fingers and offered them as a sacrifice to the Great Spirit, in order that they might return laden with the scalps of their enemies.[2] Every spring, at the first peal of thunder, "the Assiniboins offer it sacrifices; some burn tobacco and present to the Great Spirit the most exquisite pieces of buffalo meat by casting them into the fire; while others make deep incisions in the fleshy parts of their bodies, and even cut off the first joints of their fingers to offer them in sacrifice. Thunder, next to the sun, is their Great Wah-kon."[3]

The sacrifice of finger-joints among the Blackfoot Indians.

Among the Blackfoot Indians the sacrifice of a finger or a finger-joint was made on various occasions. In their territory there rises from the plain, like a huge pyramidal

[1] Lewis H. Morgan, *Ancient Society* (London, 1877), p. 160 note.

[2] J. de Smet, in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xiv. (Lyons, 1842) pp. 67 *sq.*

[3] J. de Smet, *Western Missions and Missionaries* (New York, 1863), p. 135. The name Wah-kon is doubtless identical with the Dacotan word *wakan*, which signifies "spiritual, sacred, consecrated, wonderful, incomprehensible." See S. R. Riggs, *Dakota-English Dictionary* (Washington, 1890), pp. 507 *sq.*; *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, p. 225 note. As to the occasion of the sacrifice, the hearing of the first thunder in spring, compare G. B. Grinnell, *Pawnee Hero Stories and Folk-tales* (New York, 1889), p. 360, "Like some other tribes of the plains Indians, the Pawnees had a certain special worship at the time of the first thunder in the spring. This first thunder warned them that winter was at an end and that the time of the planting was drawing near." The Assiniboin sacrifices, described in the text, have no doubt long been obsolete in the remainder of the tribe. They are not mentioned by Mr. Robert H. Lowie in his account of these Indians (*The Assiniboine*, New York, 1909, *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, vol. iv. Part i.). He mentions (p. 42) that "unlike the Crow, the Assiniboine did not cut off a finger in token of mourning." As to the custom of the Crow Indians in this respect, see below, pp. 228 *sq.*

mound, a conical hill some two hundred feet high, which commands a wide view of the Red-Deer and Bow River valleys. It is called Kekip-kip Sesoatars or "the Hill of the Bloody Sacrifice." A natural platform crowns its summit. At the northern end of the platform stands a small rough boulder with the figures of a crescent moon and a star carved out of its upper surface. A little basin is hollowed out within the figure of the star. In times of great private or public necessity, when extraordinary blessings were desired, such as the successful return of the warriors from an expedition, the cure of inveterate disease, or the multiplication of game in the hunting grounds of the tribe, the platform used to be thronged with worshippers; and sometimes a man would sacrifice a finger of his left hand to the Morning Star at the first appearance of that luminary on the horizon. He laid the finger on the top of the stone, cut it off, and allowed the blood to flow into the basin. Then, throwing the sacrificial knife on the ground, he held up the bleeding finger to the star, crying, "Hail! O Episors, Lord of the Night, hail! Hear me, regard me from above. To thee I give of my blood, I give of my flesh. Glorious is thy coming, all-powerful in battle, son of the Sun, I worship thee; hear my prayer. Grant me my petition, O Episors!" Then he laid the severed finger in the basin of the star-like figure, descended the hill, and returned to his village at sunrise. Among the Blackfeet these self-inflicted wounds ranked equal with those received on the battlefield, and were always mentioned first in the public recital of the warriors' great deeds at the national feast.[1] The Blackfeet also worshipped the Sun, whom they

[1] Jean l'Heureux, M.A., Government Interpreter, Blackfoot Indians, "The Kekip-Sesoators, 'or Ancient Sacrificial Stone, of the North-West Tribes of Canada," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xv. (1886) pp. 162 *sq.* The Morning Star figured prominently in the religion and mythology of some Indian tribes of North America and Mexico. Among tribes which practised agriculture the worship of the star seems to have been particularly associated with the fertilizing of the seed-corn. The Pawnees offered human sacrifices on that occasion at the command of the Morning Star. See Edwin James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains* (London, 1823), ii. 80 *sq.*; *Spirits of the Corn and the Wild*, i. 238 *sq.* (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part v.). The Morning Star is said to be one of the chief gods of the Cora Indians of Mexico; the seed-corn is presented to him with a prayer that he will render it fruitful. See Carl Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico* (London, 1903), i. 511, 522, 525; K. Th.

regarded as a beneficent being, very wise and kind to those who do right. To him they made presents of clothing, fine robes, or furs, and in extreme cases, when the prayer was for life itself, they sacrificed to him a finger or, what they valued still more, a lock of hair.[1] In this tribe women mourned for dead relations by cutting their hair short. For the loss of a husband or son, but not of a daughter, they not only cut their hair, but often took off one or more joints of their fingers, and always scarified the calves of their legs.[2]

Amputation of finger-joints in mourning among the North American Indians.

This custom of amputating finger-joints in mourning has been observed by many tribes, not only in America but in other parts of the world. For example, "cutting off a finger-joint on the loss of a child or of a beloved husband was a frequent occurrence within certain northern Déné tribes. I know, for instance, a Sekanais woman who to this day survives three self-inflicted mutilations, whereby she lost two finger-joints and one ear."[3] Here apparently the amputation of an ear is considered equivalent to the amputation of a finger-joint; both mutilations are practised for the same purpose. Though the writer does not say so, the custom was perhaps limited to, or at least chiefly practised by, the women of the tribes. Thus of one tribe in the same region we are told that "a singular custom prevails among the Nateotetain women, which is to cut off one joint of a finger upon the death of a near relative. In consequence of this practice some old women may be seen with two joints off every finger on both hands. The men bear their sorrows more stoically, being content in such cases with shaving the head and cutting their flesh with flints."[4] Among the Beaver Indians of Western Canada, when death overtakes

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Preuss, *Die Nayarit-Expedition*, i. *Die Religion der Cora-Indianer* (Leipsic, 1912), pp. lxi *sqq.*, xcii *sqq.*

[1] G. B. Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales* (London, 1893), p. 258.

[2] G. B. Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, p. 194. Compare Maximilian Prinz zu Wied, *Reise in das Innere Nord-America* (Coblenz, 1839–1841), i. 583. These mutilations seem now to be a thing of the past. See Walter McClintock, *The Old North Trail* (London, 1910), p. 150.

[3] Rev. Father A. G. Morice, "The Great Déné Race," *Anthropos*, i. (1906) p. 724. The Dénés are the widespread Indian family of North-West America, whose name is more usually spelled Tinneh.

[4] H. H. Bancroft, *Native Races of the Pacific States of North America* (London, 1875–1876), i. 127.

any of them, their property "is sacrificed and destroyed; nor is there any failure of lamentation or mourning on such occasion: they who are more nearly related to the departed person, black their faces, and sometimes cut off their hair; they also pierce their arms with knives and arrows. The grief of the females is carried to a still greater excess; they not only cut their hair, and cry and howl, but they will sometimes, with the utmost deliberation, employ some sharp instrument to separate the nail from the finger, and then force back the flesh beyond the first joint, which they immediately amputate. But this extraordinary mark of affliction is only displayed on the death of a favourite son, an husband, or a father. Many of the old women have so often repeated this ceremony, that they have not a complete finger remaining on either hand."[1] Among the Sioux or Dacota Indians, "when a rich man loses a relative, as a beloved wife or favourite daughter, he sometimes, in the excess of his grief, destroys all his property, including his lodge or tent, and kills all his horses, leaving himself utterly poverty-stricken. For many days he holds no communication with any one, but sits bowed down with grief, and alone. He bears his sorrow in silence. The squaws, on the other hand, howl and make the most dismal sounds, tearing their hair, and gashing their bodies with knives. I have seen some Indians who even cut off the joints of their fingers in the excess of their grief. When Red Dog's son died in March 1872, he sat beside the body the whole day, naked, with his flesh cut and slashed, and blood running from every wound."[2] Among the Crow Indians it was a rule that if a person made a present to a friend and died, the beneficiary must perform some recognized act of mourning, such as cutting off the joint of a finger at the funeral, or surrender the property to the clan of his benefactor. This practice of amputating finger-joints in mourning used to be very common among the Crows. At a Crow encampment on the Upper Missouri the eminent ethnologist Lewis

[1] Alexander Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal, on the River St. Laurence, through the Continent of North America* (London, 1801), p. 148.

[2] Col. Albert G. Brackett, U.S. Army, "The Sioux or Dakota Indians," *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution for the year 1876* (Washington, 1877), p. 470.

H. Morgan saw a number of women and men with their hands mutilated by this practice.[1] When Captains Lewis and Clark were on their exploring expedition to the source of the Missouri River, they were visited by the son of the grand chief of the Mandans, who had his two little fingers cut off at the second joints. On inquiring into the cause of this mutilation they learned that it was customary to express grief for the death of relations by some corporeal suffering, and that the usual mode was to lose two joints of the little fingers, or sometimes the other fingers.[2] Another early traveller in these regions records that "a cruel proof of heartfelt grief is exhibited by some of the natives on the upper parts of the Missouri; they cut off joints of their fingers; the individual cuts the skin and ligaments of the joint with his common eating knife, then places the joint between his teeth, and twists it off with violence, the teeth performing at the same time the offices of a wedge and a vice."[3]

Amputation of finger-joints in mourning among the South American Indians.

Speaking of the Charruas or Tscharos, as he calls them, of Paraguay, a Catholic missionary observes that "they are almost as ferocious as the beasts among which they live. They go almost completely naked, and have hardly anything human except the shape. No other proof of their barbarity is needed than the strange custom which they observe at the death of their relations. When some one dies, each of his kinsfolk must cut off the end of the fingers of his hand, or even an entire finger, to testify his grief; if so many people die that the hands of their relatives are completed mutilated, they proceed to their feet, amputating the toes in like manner, as death carries off some of their relations."[4] A later traveller has described the singular mourning customs of the Charruas in more detail. According to him, when a father, husband, or adult brother died, his daughters, sisters, and wife cut off a joint or joints of their fingers, beginning with the little finger. Further, they pierced their arms, breasts, and sides from the

[1] Lewis H. Morgan, *Ancient Society* (London, 1877), p. 160.

[2] Lewis and Clark, *History of the Expedition to the Sources of the Missouri* (reprinted, London, 1905), i. 171.

[3] Edwin James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains* (London, 1823), ii. 3.

[4] "Lettre du Pere Antoine Sepp, Missionnaire de la Compagnie de Jesus," *Lettres Édifiantes et Curieuses*, Nouvelle Édition, ix. (Paris, 1781), p. 369.

waist upwards with the knife or lance of the deceased. The husband, however, did not go into mourning for his wife, nor the father for his children; but on the death of the father, if the children were grown up, they hid themselves naked for two whole days in their hut, taking hardly any food; such food as they did eat, must be either eggs or partridges. Then towards evening an Indian took a reed, about a palm long, and ran it through the flesh of the mourner's arm, so that the two ends projected at either side; then he inserted other reeds in like manner, till there was a row of them, at intervals of about an inch, from the wrist to the shoulder. In this state the mourner rushed into the woods with an iron-spiked pole, wherewith he dug a hole and plunged into it up to the breast. There in the hole he remained standing all night. In the morning he got out of the hole and went to a small hut prepared for the purpose, where he drew the reeds out of his arm and lay down to rest; there, too, he passed two days without eating or drinking. The next day and the following days the children of the tribe brought him partridge or partridge's eggs, left them at the door of the hut, and ran away without saying a word to him. This seclusion of the mourner lasted for ten or twelve days, at the end of which he rejoined his friends.[1] Among the Minuanes, another tribe of the same region, a widow in mourning for her husband used to cut off a joint of one of her fingers.[2] And of the Indian tribes of the Chaco in general we read that, "as a consequence of their superstitions, they give themselves up, on the death of a relative, to rigorous fasts or mutilate themselves in the most barbarous manner, cutting off joints of their fingers, covering their arms, their legs, their sides, even their breasts, in the case of the women, with a great number of wounds, the scars of which are never effaced."[3]

Amputation of finger-joints in mourning in Africa.

In Africa, a Kafir woman will sometimes cut off a joint of one of her fingers in sorrow for the death of her child.[4]

[1] Felix de Azara, *Voyages dans l'Amérique Méridionale* (Paris, 1809), ii. 25 *sqq.* Compare Alcide d'Orbigny, *L'Homme Américain* (*de l'Amérique Méridionale*) (Paris, 1839), i. 238, ii. 90 *sq.*

[2] Felix de Azara, *op. cit.* ii. 34.

[3] Alcide d' Orbigny, *L'Homme Américain*, ii. 24.

[4] Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), pp. 203, 262 *sq.*

A similar practice is said to prevail among the Bushwomen, as we learn from the following account given by an English traveller, who visited a Bushman kraal: "I met an old woman, who, having heard that I was desirous of knowing everything relative to their customs, very good-naturedly stopped to show her hands, and bade me observe that the little finger of the right hand had lost two joints, and that of the left, one. She explained to me, that they had been cut off at different times, to express grief or mourning for the death of three daughters. After this, I looked more attentively at those whom I met, and saw many other women, and some of the men, with their hands mutilated in the same manner; but it was only their little fingers which were thus shortened; and probably the loss of those joints was found to occasion no inconvenience."[1]

Amputation of finger-joints in mourning in the Nicobar Islands.

In Car Nicobar, one of the Nicobar Islands, "when a man dies, all his live stock, cloth, hatchets, fishing-lances, and, in short, every moveable thing he possesses is buried with him; and his death is mourned by the whole village. In one view, this is an excellent custom, seeing it prevents all disputes about the property of the deceased amongst his relations. His wife must conform to custom, by having a joint cut off from one of her fingers; and, if she refuses this, she must submit to have a deep notch cut in one of the pillars of her house."[2] At the present day the custom of mutilating a widow's hand appears to be obsolete in the Nicobar Islands, though the custom of mutilating the house-post persists in full vigour; the practice is either to cut through one of the posts which support the house or at least to notch it so deeply that the post must be renewed. We may conjecture that this is a substitute for totally destroying the house. Certainly the "excellent custom" of smashing all a dead man's moveable property and dumping the fragments on the grave, which not only contributes to domestic harmony by obviating all disputes about the succession, but applies a healthy stimulus to industry and trade, is still obligatory on mourners "as a

Custom of deeply notching one of the house-pillars in mourning as a substitute for destroying the house.

[1] William J. Burchell, *Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa* (London, 1822–1824), ii. 61.

[2] G. Hamilton, "A Short Description of Carnicobar," *Asiatick Researches*, vol. ii. Fifth Edition (London, 1807), p. 342.

propitiatory sacrifice to the ghost";[1] so if you can propitiate a ghost by smashing his goods, why not by pulling down his house? There is no accounting for tastes. Here, as elsewhere, the intention of all such destruction is presumably either to convey the broken property to the ghost in the spirit land or to relieve him from all temptation to come back and fetch it.

Custom of deserting or destroying a house after a death for fear of the ghost.

The custom of deserting or destroying a house in which a death has taken place is very widespread;[2] and the general,

[1] *Census of India, 1901*, vol. iii. *The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Report on the Census*, by Lieut.-Col. Sir Richard C. Temple (Calcutta, 1903), pp. 208 *sq.* The account here given of the Nicobarese funeral customs is abridged from that of E. H. Man, "Notes on the Nicobarese: Death and Burial," *The Indian Antiquary*, xxviii. (Bombay, 1899) pp. 253-262. As to the breaking of the property of the dead and depositing the fragments on the grave, see E. H. Man, *op. cit.* pp. 254, 259; as to the cutting through or notching the house-post, see *id.* p. 260. According to Mr. Man, the reasons assigned by the natives for breaking the property of the dead are to show the sincerity of their grief and to prevent unscrupulous strangers from appropriating the articles, lest the ghost should be angered by such misappropriation of his property and should visit his wrath on his negligent relatives who permitted it. The original motive, however, was probably one or other of those which I have suggested in the text.

[2] For examples see Stephen Kay, *Travels and Researches in Caffraria* (London, 1833), pp. 194 *sq.*; Lionel Decle, *Three Years in Savage Africa* (London, 1898), pp. 79, 233; James Macdonald, *Light in Africa*, Second Edition (London, 1890), p. 168; Miss Alice Werner, *The Natives of British Central Africa* (London, 1906), p. 165; R. Sutherland Rattray, *Some Folk-lore Stories and Songs in Chinyanja* (London, 1907), pp. 96 *sq.*; Sir Harry Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate*, Second Edition (London, 1904), ii. 554, 715 *sq.*, 749, 793; John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu* (Cambridge, 1915), pp. 61, 129, 227, 267; C. W. Hobley, *Eastern Uganda* (London, 1902), p. 27; Jakob Spieth, *Die Ewe-Stämme* (Berlin, 1906), pp. 288, 758, 760; Major John Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam* (London, 1855), p. 228; W. W. Skeat and C. O. Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (London, 1906), ii. 106, 111, 113, 116; Lambert, *Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* (Nouméa, 1900), p. 235; F. de Castelnau, *Expédition dans les parties centrales de l'Amérique du Sud* (Paris, 1850–1851), iv. 385; M. Dobrizhoffer, *Historia de Abiponibus* (Vienna, 1784), ii. 300; J. B. von Spix and C. F. Ph. von Martius, *Reise in Brasilien* (Munich, 1823–1831), iii. 1188; Robert Southey, *History of Brazil*, iii. (London, 1819), p. 396; (Sir) Everard F. Im Thurn, *Among the Indians of Guiana* (London, 1883), p. 225; J. Chaffanjon, *L'Orénoque et le Caura* (Paris, 1889), pp. 13 *sq.*; Alcide d'Orbigny, *L'Homme Américain* (Paris, 1839), i. 362; Diego de Landa, *Relation des Choses de Yucatan* (Paris, 1864), p. 197; Carl Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico* (London, 1903), i. 384; Frank Russell, "The Pima Indians," *Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* (Washington, 1908), p. 194; Roland B. Dixon, "The Northern Maidu," *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History*, xvii. Part iii. (New York, 1905) p. 262; James Teit, *The Thompson Indians of British Columbia*, p. 331 (*The Jesup North Pacific Expedition*). For more examples see G. A. Wilken, "Das

perhaps the universal, motive for the desertion or destruction appears to be a dread of the ghost who may be prowling about his old home. Indeed, that motive is sometimes expressly alleged for the practice. For example, among the Kai of New Guinea, "the house in which any one has died is abandoned, because his ghost makes it unsafe by night."[1] The wild Sakai of the Malay Peninsula "have so intense a terror of the ghosts of the deceased that they burn down the house, and even sometimes the village, in which a death has taken place, and never return to it."[2] The Ainos of Japan say that "in years long gone by the ancients used to burn down the hut in which the oldest woman of a family had died. This curious custom was followed because it was feared that the spirit of the woman would return to the hut after death, and, out of envy, malice, and hatred, bewitch her offspring and sons- and daughters-in-law, together with their whole families, and bring upon them various noxious diseases and many sad calamities. . . . So vicious and ill-disposed are the departed spirits of old women supposed to be, and so much power for evil are they said to possess. For this reason, therefore, the ancients used to burn down the hut in which an old woman had lived and died; the principal idea being that the soul, when it returned from the grave to exercise its diabolical spells, would be unable to find its former residence, and the objects of its hatred and fiendish intentions. The soul having been thus cheated of its prey, and its malignant designs frustrated, is supposed to wander about for a time in a towering rage searching for its former domicile, but, of course, to no purpose."[3] Among the Ngoni of British Central Africa "the hut of a deceased adult is never pulled down. It is never again used by the living, but is left to fall to pieces when the village removes to another locality. They do not think the

Haaropfer," *De verspreide Geschriften* (The Hague, 1912), iii. 402 *sqq.* Instances could easily be multiplied. I have chosen only a few to illustrate the wide diffusion of the custom. In another work I hope to deal more fully with this and other primitive devices for balking the ghost.

[1] Ch. Keysser, "Aus dem Leben der Kaileute," in R. Neuhauss, *Deutsch Neu-Guinea*, iii. (Berlin, 1911) p. 83.

[2] W. W. Skeat and C. O. Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (London, 1906), ii. 96.

[3] Rev. John Batchelor, *The Ainu of Japan* (London, 1892), pp. 222 *sq.*

spirit always lives in the hut but they think it may return to its former haunts, and so the hut is left standing."[1] When a Navaho Indian dies within a house, "the rafters are pulled down over the remains, and the place is usually set on fire. After that nothing would induce a Navaho to touch a piece of the wood or even approach the immediate vicinity of the place; even years afterward such places are recognized and avoided. The place and all about it are the especial locale of the *tcĭ'ndi*, the shade or spirit of the departed. These shades are not necessarily malevolent, but they are regarded as inclined to resent any intrusion or the taking of any liberties with them or their belongings." This custom, we are told, had much to do with the temporary character of Navaho houses, because no man cared to build a fine house which he might have to abandon at any time.[2] Among the Dhanwars, a primitive tribe inhabiting a wild hilly district of the Central Provinces in India, "when an elder man dies, his family usually abandon their hut, as it is believed that his spirit haunts it and causes death to any one who lives there."[3] The Savaras or Saoras, an aboriginal hill-tribe in Ganjam and Vizagapatam, burn a dead man's personal property because, as one of them informed an English inquirer, "If we do not burn these things with the body, the ghost (*kulba*) will come and ask us for them, and trouble us." Moreover, they hold a festival of the dead every second year, at which the ghosts, after receiving an offering of food, are bidden to begone and trouble the living no more. On this occasion every house in which a death has taken place within the two preceding years is burnt. After that, the ghost (*kulba*) "gives no more trouble, and does not come to reside in the new hut that is built on the site of the burnt one."[4] Near Dogura, in South-Eastern New Guinea, "after a death has taken place in a house it is usual for the house to be deserted and allowed to fall to pieces; but sometimes if it is so nearly

[1] W. A. Elmslie, *Among the Wild Ngoni* (London, 1899), p. 71.

[2] Cosmos Mindeleff, "Navaho Houses," *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, Part 2 (Washington, 1898), p. 487.

[3] R. V. Russell, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), ii. 498.

[4] Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), vi. 304 *sq.*, 325, 328.

new that it is a pity to have to build another, the doorway is closed up and a new doorway made in another wall and the house still used. It seems that the spirit of the dead one will haunt the place, but it can be deceived by this little artifice. As people lie awake at night they will sometimes say they have heard the spirit scratching along the wall trying to find its way into the house."[1] Among the Alfoors of Halmahera, a large island to the west of New Guinea, when a person has died in a house, it is customary for the members of his family, of both sexes, to rush about with choppers, hacking great pieces out of the posts on which the house is supported, while they also mar and spoil in a greater or less degree other articles of property which had belonged to the deceased. Thus they express the violence of their grief; but we are told that "this ceremony serves at the same time to make the ghost's parting from earthly objects the easier, since the damage done more or less to almost everything at which he laboured in life leaves him with no longer any possession on earth for which he cared."[2] Hence we can hardly doubt that the similar practice of the Nicobarese, who smash a dead man's goods and cut through the prop on which his house rests, is similarly designed to make his old home unattractive to the ghost and so to relieve the survivors from his unwelcome visits. At an earlier time, as I have suggested, the Nicobarese custom may have been to break down and desert altogether the house in which a death had occurred. Even nomadic tribes, who erect no permanent dwellings, are moved to shift their quarters by a like fear of encountering the apparitions of the recently departed. For example, among the rude savages of the Northern Territory of Australia, "as soon as anyone dies, the camps are immediately shifted, because the spirit, of whom they are frightened, haunts its old camping ground."[3] Similarly, among the primitive tribes of

Custom of hacking the house-posts in mourning with an eye to the ghost.

After a death nomadic tribes shift their quarters for fear of the ghost.

[1] Henry Newton, *In Far New Guinea* (London, 1914), p. 227.

[2] C. F. H. Campen, "Die Alfoeren van Halmahera," *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië*, April 1883, p. 293. Compare G. A. Wilken, "Het animisme bij de volken van den Indischen Archipel," *De verspreide Geschriften* (The Hague, 1912), iii. 111, who reports the custom on Campen's authority, but omits the motive assigned for it.

[3] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia* (London, 1914), p. 254.

Central Australia, "as soon as burial has taken place, the man or woman's camp in which death occurred is at once burnt down, and all the contents are then destroyed—in the case of a woman nothing whatever being preserved—and the whole of the local encampment is shifted to a new place"; and for at least two years afterwards no camp will be pitched near the grave for fear of disturbing the ghost.[1]

Fear of the ghost shown by the Nicobarese in the pains which they take to disguise themselves from him.

That the Nicobarese practices which we have been considering really flow from a fear of the ghost is further suggested by certain quaint customs which these people observe in mourning, and in which the dread of the spirits of the recently departed is expressed without ambiguity. Thus in the interval between death and burial a fire is kept burning at the foot of the house-ladder, partly, we are told, to apprise people at a distance of what has happened, but also "to keep the disembodied spirit at a distance."[2] Further, a priest commands the ghost to go quietly with the corpse to the grave and to remain there until the first memorial feast has been celebrated, after which he will be expected to retire to the spirit-land; in the meantime he is exhorted not to wander about and frighten the living by his ghostly presence. However, lest this exhortation should fall on deaf ears, "with the further object of disguising themselves so that the departed spirit may fail to recognise them, and may do them no mischief, all the mourners shave their heads, in addition to which the women shave their eye-brows, and the men eradicate with tweezers any hair they may have on their upper lips and chins. It is also common for a mourner, for the same reason, to assume some new name for him or herself, which, in a great measure, accounts for the fact that some individuals have borne several different names in the course of their lives. This dread of the disembodied spirits of their departed relatives and friends is induced by the conviction that they so keenly

[1] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1899), pp. 498, 499.

[2] E. H. Man, "Notes on the Nicobarese. Death and Burial," *The Indian Antiquary*, xxviii. (1899) p. 255; *Census of India, 1901*, vol. iii. *The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Report on the Census*, by Lieut.-Col. Sir Richard C. Temple (Calcutta, 1903), p. 209.

desire to return to the scenes and associates of their earthly existence that they are utterly unscrupulous as to the means and methods they adopt for the purpose of attaining their object."[1] Hence we may safely assume that the old Nicobarese custom of amputating the finger-joint of a widow was in like manner intended to safeguard her against the dangerous ghost of her husband, whether by disfiguring her and therefore rendering her unattractive in his eyes, by glutting his ghoulish thirst for blood, or in some other way depriving him either of the will or of the power to do her a mischief.

Amputation of finger-joints in mourning in British New Guinea.

Among the Mafulu, a tribe in the interior of British New Guinea, it is said to be a common, though not universal, custom "for a woman who has lost a child, and especially a first-born or very dear child, to amputate the top end of one of her fingers, up to the first joint, with an adze. Having done this once for one child, she will possibly do it again for another child; and a woman has been seen with three fingers mutilated in this way."[2] In the Mekeo district of British New Guinea a similar mutilation of the fingers is customary on the death of other relations. On this subject the Government agent for the district reports as follows: "In all the villages visited inland, commencing at Vanua, I observed that the custom of amputating, in some cases, the first, in others the second, joints of the index and middle fingers is very common after the death of a near relative. I could not ascertain the rules in performing such amputations, but I understood that a mother will cut off the first joint for her children and the second for her husband, father, or mother. Only the women indulge in this practice. The woman that has to amputate a joint needs not an assistant. She places the finger over a piece of wood, and with a single blow by herself of a sharp stone edge the operation is ended."[3]

Amputation of finger-joints in Dutch New Guinea.

Among the Pesegems, a Papuan tribe in the centre of Dutch New Guinea, the women were found by explorers to

[1] E. H. Man, *op. cit.* pp. 258, 261. Compare Sir Richard C. Temple, *op. cit.* p. 209.

[2] Robert W. Williamson, *The Mafulu, Mountain People of British New Guinea* (London, 1912), p. 247.

[3] A. Giulianetti, in *Annual Report on British New Guinea, 1st July 1899 to 30th June 1900* (Brisbane, 1901), p. 78.

have two joints of the middle and ring fingers missing; these joints are said to be lopped off the hand in a girl's early infancy. If the mutilation is universally inflicted on women in infancy, it can hardly be a mark of mourning, but must be explained from some more general cause, such as a superstition which applies to all females without distinction. However, the travellers noticed one woman who had her fingers intact, and when they questioned her as to the reason for her exceptional treatment, she endeavoured to explain it by uttering repeatedly the word *morup*. Among the native men there were some who had the upper part of the left ear shorn obliquely away, and these men were also designated by the same word *morup*. This suggests that among these people, as apparently among others, there is some unexplained connexion between the mutilation of the hand and the mutilation of the ear.[1]

Amputation of finger-joints and other bodily mutilations in mourning in Polynesia.

At the funeral of a chief the natives of Wallis Island, in the South Pacific, used to wound their faces with shells, bruise and hack their heads with clubs and hatchets, and cut off joints of their fingers, which they threw into the coffin.[2] In Samoa, also, a joint of a finger, or even a whole finger, was sometimes amputated in mourning for a friend; but the custom has long been obsolete.[3] At the death of a chief the Tongans or Friendly Islanders used to lop off joints of their fingers, and slashed their temples, faces, and bosoms with the teeth of sharks;[4] indeed, the custom of amputating two joints of the little finger as a mark of sorrow for the death of a relation or friend, as well as of a chief, is said to have been common in Tonga.[5] The Maoris of New Zealand are also

[1] J. C. van Eerde, "Fingermutilatie in Centraal Nieuw-Guinea," *Tijdschrift van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, Tweede Serie, xxviii. (1911) pp. 49 *sq.*

[2] Letter of Father Bataillon, dated July 1838, in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xiii. (Lyons, 1841) p. 20. Some six years later another Catholic missionary remarked of the natives of Wallis Island that "they have almost all lost the little finger of the hand by amputation—a mutilation which they inflicted on themselves in honour of their gods. It is to-day the only trace that remains of their ancient superstitions." See Father Mathieu's letter, dated 20th May 1844, in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xviii. (Lyons, 1846) p. 6.

[3] Rev. John B. Stair, *Old Samoa* (London, 1897), p. 117.

[4] William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, Second Edition (London, 1832–1836), iv. 177.

[5] *Voyage de la Pérouse autour du Monde*, redigé par M. L. A. Millet-Mureau (Paris, 1797), iii. 254. In Tonga the amputation of a joint of the little finger "is still common, and was

reported to have amputated finger-joints in mourning.[1] Among the Fijians it was customary to cut off the little finger as a sign of mourning when relatives or great chiefs died. On such occasions the fourth finger was said to "cry itself hoarse in vain for its absent mate."[2] So common and so persistent was the practice that as late as 1908 few of the older Fijians were to be found who had the fingers of both hands intact; most of them, indeed, had lost both little fingers.[3] According to one good authority, Fijian mourners amputated the joints of the small toe as well as of the little finger,[4] but this is denied by another good authority.[5] When a wealthy family had suffered a bereavement, poorer people would sometimes lop off joints of their fingers and, as it is alleged, of their toes, and send the dismembered joints as a mark of sympathy to the mourners, and the delicate attention, we are assured, never failed to elicit a reward.[6] When a king of Fiji died, these sacrifices were not always voluntary. On one such occasion orders were issued to amputate one hundred fingers, but in fact only sixty were taken off; these were inserted in a slit reed and stuck along the eaves of the late king's house.[7] Nor were fingers the only parts of their persons which Fijians might be required to sacrifice in honour of their deceased rulers. At Muthuata, when a chief died, all the boys who had arrived at a suitable age were circumcised, and many boys suffered the loss of their little fingers. The severed foreskins and fingers were laid in the chief's grave; and that ceremony being over, the chief's relations presented young bread-fruit trees to the circumcised and mutilated boys, whose kinsfolk were bound to cultivate the trees till the boys were able to do it for themselves. Afterwards the

Amputation of finger-joints in mourning in Fiji.

Sacrifice of foreskins in mourning in Fiji.

formerly almost universal as a sign of mourning, or of deprecation of sickness or misfortune" (J. E. Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise among the Islands of the Western Pacific*, London, 1853, p. 123).

[1] William Brown, *New Zealand and its Aborigines* (London, 1845), p. 19. The writer adds that "this is now rarely done."

[2] Lorimer Fison, *Tales from Old Fiji* (London, 1904), p. 168.

[3] Basil Thomson, *The Fijians* (London, 1908), p. 375.

[4] Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, New Edition (New York, 1851), iii. 101.

[5] Thomas Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians*, Second Edition (London, 1860), i. 198.

[6] Charles Wilkes, *op. cit.* iii. 101.

[7] Thomas Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians*, Second Edition, i. 198.

chief's wives were strangled that they might accompany their dead husband to the spirit-land.[1] For example, in Somu-somu, one of the chief towns in Fiji, when the king's youngest son, Katu Mbithi, was lost at sea, "all his wives were strangled, with much form and ceremony. Some accounts make their number as high as seventy or eighty; the missionaries stated it below thirty. There were various other ceremonies, not less extraordinary. To supply the places of the men who were lost with Katu Mbithi, the same number of boys, from the ages of nine to sixteen, were taken and circumcised. For this ceremony long strips of white native cloth were prepared to catch the blood when the foreskin was cut. These strips, when sprinkled with blood, were tied to a stake, and stuck up in the market-place. Here the boys assembled to dance, for six or seven nights, a number of men being placed near the stakes, with a native horn (a conch-shell), which they blew, while the boys danced around the stake for two or three hours together. This dance consisted of walking, jumping, singing, shouting, yelling, etc., in the most savage and furious manner, throwing themselves into all manner of attitudes. . . . After the circumcision of the boys, many of the female children had the first joint of their little fingers cut off. The ceremonies ended by the chiefs and people being assembled in the market-place to witness the institution of the circumcised boys to manhood."[2]

The amputation of finger-joints in mourning is perhaps a sacrifice offered to the ghost to induce him to spare the survivors.

We have now to ask, what is the meaning of this custom so commonly observed in mourning? Why do people cut off their finger-joints on the death of a relation or of a chief? That the custom was supposed in some way to benefit the dead person seems to follow from the practice in Wallis Island of throwing the amputated finger-joints into the coffin,[3] and from the practice in Fiji of depositing them, along with the severed foreskins, in the grave.[4] Now we have seen that in Fiji, Tonga, and Futuna, similar sacrifices of finger-joints have been offered to the gods for the purpose of inducing them to spare the lives of sick

[1] Charles Wilkes, *op. cit.* iii. 100; as to the strangling of the wives and the motive for it, see *id.*, iii. 96.

[2] Charles Wilkes, *op. cit.* iii. 158 *sq.*

[3] Above, p. 238.

[4] Above, p. 239.

people.[1] Can it be that mourners in like manner sacrifice their finger-joints to the ghost of the recently departed, in the hope that he will accept the offering and spare their lives? We have seen that the Nicobarese, among whom widows are said formerly in certain cases to have amputated their finger-joints, stand in fear of ghosts and are at great pains to elude them or keep them at a distance.[2] A similar dread of the spirits of those who have recently departed from life is practically universal among mankind; these poor souls, prompted by envy or affection, are supposed to be constantly on the look-out to draw away their surviving friends and relations to the spirit land, and great vigilance must be exerted and many strange devices employed for the purpose of defeating their affectionate or malignant purpose.[3] It would, therefore, be quite in harmony with the working of the savage mind to suppose that the sacrifice of a finger-joint in mourning is a mode of propitiating the ghost and inducing him to accept the joint instead of the person. On this view we can explain an old Greek legend. It is said that the matricide Orestes, driven mad by the Furies of his murdered mother, recovered his senses on biting off one of his fingers; and that when he had done so, the Furies, who had seemed black to him before, changed their aspect and appeared to him white.[4] As the Furies which were thought to haunt a murderer were practically indistinguishable from the avenging ghost of his victim,[5] the purport of the legend is that the angry ghost of Clytaemnestra, appeased by the sacrifice of her murderer's finger, ceased to haunt him and so permitted him to recover his wandering wits.

Orestes and the Furies of his murdered mother.

The same theory may perhaps explain the reported practice of amputating the finger-joint of a child whose elder brothers or sisters have died.[6] It is possible that in

Custom of mutilating the dead bodies of children whose elder brothers or sisters have also died.

[1] Above, pp. 210-213.

[2] Above, pp. 236 *sq.*

[3] For examples of such devices I may refer to my paper, "On certain Burial Customs as illustrative of the Primitive Theory of the Soul," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xv. (1886) pp. 64 *sqq.* The theme might be amplified almost indefinitely.

[4] Pausanias viii. 34. 3.

[5] Erwin Rohde, *Psyche*[3] (Tübingen and Leipsic, 1903), i. 270. Hence such expressions as "the Furies of Clytaemnestra" (Pausanias viii. 34. 4), "the Furies of Laius and Oedipus" (Pausanias ix. 5. 15).

[6] See above, pp. 198, 201, 203.

this case the finger-joint is offered to the ghosts of the dead brothers or sisters, in the hope that they will accept it as a ransom for the life of the surviving infant whom otherwise they would call away to the spirit land. Yet the custom of mutilating the hands and ears of such children can hardly be wholly dissociated from another class of mutilations which are practised in similar cases with a similar intention, but with this important difference, that they are inflicted not on a living but on a dead child whose elder brothers or sisters have died. In all such cases the practice seems to rest on a belief in the transmigration or reincarnation of souls. The parents imagine that, when their children die one after another, the soul which has been born in them all is one and the same, which has contracted a vicious habit of shuffling off its mortal coil almost as soon as it has put it on. Hence in order either to know the child again at its next incarnation, or to break it of its bad habit and prevail on it to remain a little longer in the world, they inflict a more or less slight mutilation on the last dead baby, for example, by slitting an ear or breaking a finger, in the expectation that at its next birth the infant will exhibit the same bodily mark, and that in order not to incur the pain of repeated mutilations the immortal soul will consent to inhabit its mortal body for a reasonable length of time, and thus will spare its parents the sorrow of mourning its decease again and again. But if in spite of these precautions the soul of the child obstinately persists in dying as soon as born, the parents lose patience, and to avoid all further experience of these domestic bereavements they attempt to prevent the reincarnation of the flighty and volatile soul by cutting up or otherwise destroying the last dead baby's body altogether. Such, when due allowance has been made for the vagueness and inconsistency of savage philosophy, appears to be the train of thought underlying the following practices, as they have been reported and explained by competent observers.

Custom in Bengal of cutting off the nose or ear of a

In Bengal, "should a woman give birth to several stillborn children in succession, the popular belief is that the same child reappears on each occasion, when, to frustrate the designs of the evil spirit that has taken possession of the

child, the nose, or a portion of an ear, is cut off, and the body is cast away on a dunghill."[1] Here the soul of the child is interpreted as an evil spirit which has taken possession of the infantile body; but the African evidence, which I am about to adduce, suggests that in India also the "evil spirit" may be no more than an ordinary human soul which, out of sheer perverseness or malignity of disposition, persists in disappointing the fond hopes of its parents by dying as soon as born.

stillborn child after several similar births in the family.

"Destroying the body by beating up, or by cutting up, is a widely diffused custom in West Africa in the case of dangerous souls, and is universally followed with those that have contained wanderer-souls, *i.e.* those souls which keep turning up in the successive infants of a family. A child dies, then another child comes to the same father or mother, and that dies, after giving the usual trouble and expense. A third arrives and if that dies, the worm—the father, I mean—turns, and if he is still desirous of more children, he just breaks one of the legs of the body before throwing it in the bush. This he thinks will act as a warning to the wanderer-soul and give it to understand that if it will persist in coming into his family, it must settle down there and give up its flighty ways. If a fourth child arrives in the family, 'it usually limps,' and if it dies the justly irritated parent cuts its body up carefully into very small pieces, and scatters them, doing away with the soul altogether."[2] Among the Ibibios of Southern Nigeria, children who die between the ages of one and seven years are laid in the grave on their right sides, as if sleeping, with hands folded palm to palm and placed between the knees. But if several children have died in a family, one after another, at the age of from eight to ten, the next child to expire at that age is buried face downwards, "so that he may not see the way to be born again." It is thought that his spirit is one of those mischievous sprites who are only born again to

West African custom of mutilating or cutting up the dead body of a child whose elder brothers or sisters have also died.

[1] (Sir) H. H. Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1892), i. 211. The account is derived from the information of midwives imparted to Dr. James Wise, who enjoyed special opportunities for learning the truth on this subject. Compare W. Crooke, *Popular Religion and Folk-lore of Northern India* (Westminster, 1896), ii. 67.

[2] Mary H. Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* (London, 1897), p. 480.

bring grief to parents, and who would never grow up to be a comfort to them in later years. The mother or grandmother of such an ill-conditioned brat "usually breaks a finger or slits an ear of the corpse before it is laid in the grave, that, when it is born again, they may know it at once because it will bear this mark. The spirits are said to dislike this treatment so much 'that they often give up their bad habit of dying, and on the next reincarnation grow up like other people.'"[1]

South Nigerian custom of burning the bodies of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

Among the Efik of Southern Nigeria, when a mother has lost several children in rapid succession, she "burns the dead body of the last infant with a view of putting a stop to the mortality. Among the Andoni the woman, acting more or less independently, takes the corpse in a canoe and conveys it to some out-of-the-way spot, usually to one of the many islands which are in their locality. There, having collected sufficient wood, she makes a fire, in which she burns it. The idea, of course, as in the case of the Efik, is the same, *i.e.* to prevent a recurrence of early dissolution in the event of other children being born to her. But mark well the principle—also identical in both cases—upon which this act is based. In no sense does the fire destroy the soul of the child, for this essence, according to their belief, is apparently invulnerable when confined to the human organism, but it is presumed that the soul, when it arrives in spirit land—children being exempted from the burial rites—will communicate the fact of the treatment accorded to it by the woman to the spirit elders of the family. The object of this communication is meant to be a warning to

[1] D. Amaury Talbot, *Woman's Mysteries of a Primitive People, the Ibibios of Southern Nigeria* (London, etc., 1915), p. 221. Of the Gonds of India we read that "sometimes they make a mark with soot or vermilion on the body of a dead man, and if some similar mark is subsequently found on any newborn child it is held that the dead man's spirit has been reborn in it." See R. V. Russell, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), iii. 94. In Bilaspore, a district of the Central Provinces in India, "it is customary to make a mark with soot or with oil on the body of the deceased. When children are born into the families of nearer relatives the birth-marks are closely examined, and if any of these should have the faintest resemblance to the mark made on the deceased, it is believed that he has become reincarnated in the new-born babe." See E. M. Gordon, *Indian Folk Tales* (London, 1908), p. 51. These passages illustrate the practice of marking the dead for the purpose of identifying them at their next incarnation.

the spirit members of the household, especially to those who intend to return to this world through the agency of the woman in question, to be prepared to live, and in this way to avoid a similar disagreeable experience."[1]

Gold Coast custom of threatening live children and mutilating dead children whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

At Accra, on the Gold Coast of West Africa, in the year 1845 an English missionary witnessed a scene which he describes as follows: "I saw this morning a great number of women and children carrying a child about the streets in a basket, shouting as loudly as they could. On enquiry I learned that the mother had lost two or three children previously, who had died when about the age of this. When such is the case they believe that the same soul which was in the first child returns, and enters the next, and that the child, of its own will through mere spite, dies. Hence these steps are taken. The child while alive is besmutted with charcoal, put into a basket, and carried round the town, when the people take care to abuse it for its wickedness, and to threaten it, should it die. Every ill-usage that can be offered, short of murder, is shown it. Should it afterwards die, its head is sometimes crushed with stones, the body refused a burial, is thrown either into the sea, or in the bush. These things are done to prevent its coming again in another child. Some of the people have a notion that such children belong to the orang-outangs, that when they die this animal comes to claim them. These make images and place them in the road that the beast may take the image and spare the child."[2]

The idea of reincarnation at the root of these mutilations of dead children.

In this last account the living child is smudged with black and otherwise ill-treated, not for the purpose of disfiguring it and therefore rendering it unacceptable to spirits which might otherwise carry it off, but to frighten the child itself and so to break it of the bad habit of dying. The custom, therefore, differs materially from the practices described above, of giving children foul names, clothing them in rags, placing them among sweepings, and so forth,

[1] Major Arthur Glyn Leonard, *The Lower Niger and its Tribes* (London, 1906), p. 213.

[2] Major A. J. N. Tremearne, "Extracts from the Diary of the late Rev. John Martin, Wesleyan Missionary in West Africa, 1843–1848," *Man*, xii. (1912) No. 74, p. 142. Compare A. J. N. Tremearne, *The Tailed Head-hunters of Nigeria* (London, 1912), pp. 173 *sq.*

for the purpose of deceiving the demons or other dangerous spirits, who are prone to ravish away attractive children from the arms of their parents.[1] The distinction between the two sets of observances springs from the presence of the idea of reincarnation in the one set of customs and its absence in the other.

Bambara custom of mutilating the dead bodies of children whose elder brothers or sisters have also died.

Among the pagan Bambara of the Upper Niger the belief in the reincarnation of human souls is universal. The soul of an infant who dies at the breast, of a boy who dies before circumcision, and of a girl who dies before the corresponding rite of excision has been performed upon her, is supposed to enter once more into the mother's womb and to be born again into the world. Hence such children are buried in the fore court or even in the house in which they were born, that their souls may not have far to go and may not mistake their mother when their time comes to be reincarnated. But when such a child is buried, custom requires that, in presence of the mother who bore it, the father should break one of the infant's great toes. Many fathers do more. They mark the child with a knife on its forehead, the nape of the neck, the shoulders, and the arms, and they split the upper lip or the tip of one ear. The ceremony naturally makes a deep impression on the mother who witnesses it, and accordingly Bambara women are said sometimes to give birth to infants bearing bodily marks which resemble those made by their husbands on the dead baby. Such marks confirm the people in their belief that the soul of the last child to die has been born again in the new one. For example, at the village of Welengela, between Segou and Sens, there was a man born with a harelip; and the villagers were unanimous in the explanation they gave of this personal peculiarity. They said that his mother had given birth to sickly and puny infants, who all died a few weeks after they were born, till the father in a rage cleft the lip of the last child with a cut of his knife. So the next time that child came to life, it was born with a harelip, thus bearing on its body the very mutilation inflicted by the father on its predecessor. Others are said to be born with tattoo marks on the back, breast, and arms, and their relations stoutly affirm

[1] See above, pp. 168 *sqq.*

that these patterns were made by the father on the last dead brother or sister of the person who exhibits them.[1]

The writer who records these Bambara customs and beliefs is apparently of opinion that in mutilating or otherwise marking his last dead child the father has no other object in view than that of recognizing the infant the next time it is born into the family.[2] But in view of the explanations given of the similar customs which are observed in similar cases by tribes of Southern Nigeria and the Gold Coast, we may surmise that the principal, if not the only, object of such mutilations and scarifications is to induce the infant at its next birth to remain in life, lest by dying again it should again expose its dead body to the same cruel and barbarous treatment.

Such mutilations seem intended to induce the soul of the child to remain in life at its next reincarnation.

A similar belief in the rebirth of souls has led to similar mutilations of dead children in other parts of the world. Thus in Annam, "the people believe in the transmigration of souls, and for that reason, when a little child dies, the parents sometimes cut the body in pieces, which they carry away in different directions, fearing lest the child should enter again into its mother's womb the next time she conceives."[3] Among the Kwakiutl Indians of British Columbia, "if the children of a couple always die while very young, the little finger of the last child to die is wound with a string. A notch is cut in the upper rim of the burial box, in which the finger is placed. Then the cover is put on, and the finger is cut off. It is hidden in the woods that nobody may find it. The body of the child is placed on a new tree, not on the tree on which other children are put."[4] No explanation of these Kwakiutl customs is given by the writer who reports them; but in the light of the African parallels we may conjecture that by amputating the dead child's little finger and

Mutilation of dead children to prevent the reincarnation of their souls in Annam and North America.

[1] L'Abbé Jos. Henry, *L'Âme d'un peuple Africain, les Bambara* (Münster i. W. 1910), pp. 56 *sqq.*, 216 *sq.*

[2] L'Abbé Jos. Henry, *op. cit.* p. 57, "*Il a dans sa pensée que l'enfant qui lui succèdera, sera animé par l'âme du défunt et il ne néglige rien pour en avoir, si possible, la certitude.*"

[3] "Lettre de M. Guerard, missionnaire apostolique à Tong-king," *Nouvelles Lettres Édifiantes des Missions de la Chine et des Indes Orientales*, vii. (Paris, 1823) p. 194.

[4] Franz Boas, in "Eleventh Report of the Committee on the North-Western Tribes of Canada," *Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Liverpool Meeting, 1896*, p. 580 (p. 11 of the separate reprint).

hiding it apart from the body the parents desire to prevent the infant from being born again of its mother and afflicting her with a fresh sorrow by dying again in infancy. Certainly the Kwakiutl are not strangers to the idea of reincarnation; for they believe that the soul of a deceased person returns again in the first child born after his death.[1] We have just seen that in Annam the dead body of an infant is sometimes cut in pieces and the pieces separated from each other for the express purpose of preventing the child from playing the same trick on its mother again.

Mutilation of dead children in connexion with the theory of reincarnation.

Thus it appears that the widespread belief in the reincarnation of human souls has given rise in many places to a practice of mutilating the bodies of children who die young, and that the aim of such mutilations is either to induce the soul of the child to remain longer in life at its next reincarnation or to prevent it from being reborn altogether. Among the mutilations performed for this purpose are breaking a leg or a toe, scarifying the face and various parts of the body with a knife, splitting a lip, amputating or breaking a finger, and slitting or cutting off a portion of an ear. Of these various injuries the laceration of the ear would seem to be particularly frequent, since it is reported to be practised in India and by two tribes of Africa;[2] next to it, perhaps, in respect of frequency is the mangling of a finger, which is carried out both in Africa and America.[3]

The mutilation of living children, whose elder brothers and sisters have died, may be intended to prevent them from dying.

Do these mutilations of dead infants, performed with a view to their future reincarnation, throw any light on the similar mutilations of living infants whose elder brothers and sisters have died? We have seen that just as the fingers and ears of dead children are mutilated in order to prevent them from dying at their next incarnation, so the fingers and ears of living children, whose elder brothers and sisters have died, are mutilated apparently for the purpose of preserving them in life.[4] The parallelism of the customs suggests that it springs from a parallelism of ideas. And as the belief appears to be widespread that when the children of a family

[1] Franz Boas, in "Sixth Report of the Committee on the North-Western Tribes of Canada," *Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Leeds Meeting, 1890*, p. 59 of the separate reprint.

[2] Above, pp. 242 *sq.*, 244, 246.

[3] Above, pp. 244, 247.

[4] Above, pp. 190, 195, 198, 201, 203.

die in rapid succession, they are nothing but one and the same infant who returns again and again to his mother's womb,[1] it is natural to suppose that the mutilations practised on a living child, whose elder brothers and sisters are dead, may be intended to serve the very same purpose as the similar mutilations practised on a dead child whose elder brothers and sisters have died before him; that is, they may be intended to prevent the child from dying by frightening him with the long course of bodily lacerations and injuries which he will have to undergo if he persists in his unconscionable practice of dying and being born again at short intervals. This explanation of the curious custom of mutilating live children, whose elder brothers and sisters perished in infancy, has a certain advantage over the alternative explanation suggested at the outset of our inquiry, namely, that these mutilations are intended to deform the infants and so to render them unattractive to the spirits who are believed to have carried off their elder brothers and sisters.[2] For on this latter theory, as we saw,[3] it is difficult to account for the singular fact that in some parts of India and Africa the mother swallows the piece which she has amputated from the ear of her infant. The act, almost unintelligible on the hypothesis that the amputation is intended to guard the child against spirits who have designs on its life, becomes intelligible on the hypothesis of reincarnation; for a mother who, taught by sad experience, foresees the possibility or even the probability of the new baby following all its predecessors along the dusty road of death, may not unnaturally attempt to ensure its return to the maternal womb by taking a morsel of its tiny body into her own. Surely, she may think, at its next birth the baby will seek for the missing portion of its ear in the body of its old mother and not of a new one. That this is the true ex-

The swallowing of a piece of the child's ear by the mother may be intended to secure its rebirth in her womb.

[1] In addition to the evidence I have already cited, I may quote the observations of Sir Richard C. Temple on the beliefs of the Andaman Islanders: "Every child conceived has had a prior existence, and the theory of metempsychosis appears in many other superstitions, notably in naming a second child after a previous dead one, because the spirit of the former babe has been transferred to the present one." See *Census of India, 1901*, vol. iii. *The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Report on the Census* by Lieut.-Col. Sir Richard C. Temple (Calcutta, 1903), p. 63.

[2] Above, pp. 189 *sq.*

[3] Above, pp. 195 *sq.*

planation of the remarkable custom observed by some Indian and African mothers, I am far from confidently affirming; but at least it suggests a reason, based on deep maternal instincts, for conduct which to the civilized observer might seem only cruel and absurd. Subsequent investigations may serve either to confirm or to refute it.

European treatment of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

Before we proceed to consider other cases of piercing or mutilating the human ear, it may be of interest to observe, that the curious devices, to which in various parts of the world mothers resort for the sake of saving the lives of younger children whose elder brothers and sisters have died, are not without their parallels in Europe. Thus in Macedonia, "when a mother loses child after child, the proper course for her to pursue is to take her last-born and expose it in the street. A friend, by previous arrangement, picks up the child and clothes it. A few days after she returns it to the mother, and for three years it is clothed in strange clothes, that is, clothes begged of relatives and friends. Sometimes, in addition to this ceremony, the child's right ear is adorned with a silver ring which must be worn through life. At Liakkovikia the precautions are more elaborate still. The family sponsor being dismissed, the midwife takes the new-born infant and casts it outside the house-door. The first person who happens to pass by is obliged to act as sponsor. If, even after this measure, the children persist in dying, the mother is delivered of her next in a strange house, surrounded by all her kinswomen. As soon as the infant is born, the midwife puts it in a large handkerchief and carries it round the room, crying, 'A child for sale!' One of the women present buys it for a few silver pieces and returns it to the mother. Then forty women, who have been married only once, contribute a silver coin apiece, and out of these coins a hoop is made through which the child is passed. Afterwards this silver hoop is turned into some other ornament, which the child must always wear."[1]

Pretended exposure and sale of such children in Macedonia.

Resemblance of the treatment of such children in Macedonia, Africa, and India.

Some of these quaint contrivances for preserving the lives of children whose elder brothers and sisters have died closely resemble devices which we have seen employed by parents for a precisely similar purpose in Africa and India.

[1] G. F. Abbott, *Macedonian Folk-lore* (Cambridge, 1903), pp. 137 *sq.*

Such in particular are the pretences of exposing the infant in the street and of selling it to a stranger, and the practice of dressing it in borrowed clothes.[1] To judge by analogy, these proceedings aim at deceiving the spirits who are supposed to lie in wait for the new-born child; they tend to impress on these dangerous but simple-minded beings a belief that the infant belongs, not to its real parents, but to the person who has bought or found it, or in whose clothes it is dressed. Thus by seeming to be childless the father and mother hope to divert the attention of the spirits from their household, and so to procure for their offspring, disguised as a stranger, the means of growing up unmolested by those baneful influences which have already proved fatal to their elder children. With a like intention, probably, the silver, which is ultimately to be fashioned into an ornament for the child, must be contributed, not by the infant's parents, but by forty married women; for, like the borrowed clothes, the borrowed silver is likely to divert the attention of the demons or fairies from the child's family to strangers. Similarly in India, as we saw, the silver or gold used to make an ornament for a child, whose elder brothers and sisters have died, must be begged by the parents from other people.[2] The passage of the baby through a silver hoop is clearly intended to put the infant out of reach of its spiritual foes; for similar passages through hoops or other narrow openings are among the commonest devices to which ignorant and superstitious people in all parts of the world resort for the purpose of eluding the pursuit of spirits.[3] And the Macedonian custom of transferring an expectant mother, in the last resort, to a strange house, there to be delivered of her latest born, is in all probability a ruse to conceal the birth from the spirits, who naturally expect the woman to be brought to bed in her own house. Finally, the practice of dismissing the family sponsor and replacing him by the first passer-by appears to be another device to outwit the spirits by bestowing on the child a wholly different name from that by which in the regular course of things it would have been christened.

The intention of the treatment is to deceive the spirits who are thought to lie in wait for the child.

[1] See above, pp. 168 *sq.*, 171, 175, 179, 180, 181, 186 *sq.*, 194.

[2] Above, p. 186.

[3] For instances see *Balder the Beautiful*, ii. 168-195 (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part vii.).

How can the guileless spirits recognize the infant under its new-fangled name?

Expedients adopted in Albania to save the lives of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

In Albania expedients of the same sort are employed to effect the same benevolent purpose. When the children of a married pair die in rapid succession, the last-born child is passed through an iron tripod; but if that measure also proves unavailing, then a cross is made out of silver contributed by nine women who must all bear the name of Maro, and the child, decorated with the cross, is exposed at a crossroad, where the first passer-by bestows a name upon it.[1] Here the passage of the Albanian child between the legs of an iron tripod is no doubt intended to serve the same end as the passage of a Macedonian child through a silver hoop; the silver cross to which nine Albanian women must contribute resembles the silver ornament to which forty Macedonian women must contribute, and like it the cross is probably thought to protect the wearer against the insidious attacks of demons; and finally the exposure of the child at a crossroad, and the imposition of a name on it by the first passer-by, may be supposed in like manner to deceive the spirits as to the parentage and personal identity of the infant.

Expedients adopted in Bulgaria and Russia to save the lives of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

So, too, in the Lom district of Bulgaria, when three children of the same mother have died soon after baptism, the parents conclude that the godfather was unlucky. Hence when a fourth child is born, the midwife exposes it immediately after birth at a crossroad, and hides herself close by to see who will find the child. The first comer, whether man or woman, adult or child, must pick up the forsaken babe and carry it straight to the church without looking behind him. There the child is baptized by the name of its accidental finder, who thus becomes a new godfather or godmother.[2] Similarly in Russia, when several children in a family have died, and the next one is to be baptized, the first person met in the street, even were he a beggar, is fetched into the house to stand godfather to the infant.[3]

[1] J. G. von Hahn, *Albanesische Studien* (Jena, 1854), i. 149.

[2] F. S. Krauss, "Haarschurgodschaft bei den Südslaven," *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, vii. (1894) pp. 194 *sq.*

[3] K. Awdejewa, "Über den Aberglauben des russischen Volkes," in *Archiv für wissenschaftliche Kunde von Russland*, herausgegeben von A. Erman, i. (1841) p. 626.

Expedient adopted in the Highlands of Scotland to save the lives of children whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

The device of bestowing an unlooked-for name on a child whose elder brothers or sisters had died, in the hope of averting a similar fate from the survivor, was not unknown among the Highlanders of Scotland. "If the children of a family were dying in infancy, one after the other, it was thought that, by changing the name, the evil would be counteracted. The new name was called a 'Road name' (*Ainm Rathaid*), being that of the first person encountered on the road when going with the child to be baptized. It was given 'upon the luck' (*air sealbhaich*) of the person met. The Mac-Rories, a sept of the Mac-Larens in Perthshire, were descendants of one who thus received his name. His parents, having lost a previous child before its baptism, were advised to change the name. They were on their way through the pass, called Lairig Isle, between Loch Erne and Glendochart, to have their second child baptized, when they were met by one Rory Mac Pherson. He was an entire stranger to them, but turned back with them, as a stranger ought to do to avoid being unlucky, and the child was called after him. *Clann 'ic-Shimigeir*, a sept of the Mac Neills, have also a road name."[1]

Esthonian mode of burying dead child whose elder brothers or sisters have died before it.

In some parts of Esthonia, when several children have died in a family, the last of them is placed in the coffin face downward and is buried in that posture, because if that is done, the people believe that the next children will be more fortunate.[2] Why subsequent children should live if the last one to die is buried face downward, does not appear at the first glance; but a clue to the meaning of the custom is furnished by the practice of the Ibibios of Southern Nigeria, who in similar cases, as we saw, bury the last child face downwards, "so that he may not see the way to be born again."[3] We may, therefore, assume with a fair degree of probability that the same custom was originally observed by the Esthonians for precisely the same reason, and that accordingly in Russia as in Africa the real motive for the interment of a baby in that posture is to prevent its soul from entering again into

[1] John Gregorson Campbell, *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1900), p. 245.

[2] J. W. Boecler, *Der Ehsten abergläubische Gebräuche, Weisen und Gewohnheiten, mit auf die Gegenwart bezüglichen Anmerkungen beleuchtet von* Dr. Fr. R. Kreutzwald (St. Petersburg, 1854), p. 18.

[3] Above, p. 243.

its mother's womb and being born again into the world. As no one is likely to suggest that the Esthonians borrowed this mode of cheating destiny from the Ibibios of Southern Nigeria, we may surmise that both peoples were led independently to adopt this expedient by the combined influence of parental affection, which is universal, and of a belief in reincarnation, which has been widespread, if not universal, among mankind.

Saxon and German treatment of children at baptism whose elder brothers or sisters have died.

Among the Saxons of Transylvania, when a child whose elder brothers or sisters have died is about to be baptized, the parents do not carry the infant out of the house through the door, but hand it through a window to the godparents, who thereupon carry it to the church and after baptism return the baby to the house in like manner. In this way they think they save the infant's life.[1] The custom of passing such children through a window instead of through the door on their way to baptism appears to be common in Germany; it is reported from Pomerania, Masuren, Voigtland, and Thuringia. In Pomerania they say that the child should be passed out and in the window head foremost, and that the godparents should be old.[2] Similarly in some parts of India, as we saw, when a name is bestowed on a child whose elder brothers or sisters have died, the infant is passed into the house, not through the door, but through an opening made under it;[3] and among the Bateso of Central Africa a fresh doorway is cut in the side of the house for the use of such a child.[4] In all these cases the original intention probably was to conceal the infant at a critical moment from the spirits who were thought to have carried off its elder brothers and sisters; though in Europe the custom

[1] G. Hillner, *Volksthümlicher Brauch und Glaube bei Geburt und Taufe im Siebenbürger Sachsenlande*, p. 38. I possess a copy of this pamphlet without date or place of publication. It is apparently a programme of the High School (*Gymnasium*) at Schässburg in Transylvania for the year 1876–1877. Compare E. Gerard, *The Land beyond the Forest* (Edinburgh and London, 1888), i. 196 *sq.*

[2] Otto Knoop, *Volkssagen, Erzählungen, Abergiauben, Gebräuche und Märchen aus dem östlichen Hinterpommern* (Posen, 1885), p. 156; M. Toeppen, *Aberglauben aus Masuren*[2] (Danzig, 1867), p. 82; J. A. E. Köhler, *Volksbrauch, Aberglauben, Sagen und andre alte Überlieferungen im Voigtlande* (Leipsic, 1867), p. 247; August Witzschel, *Kleine Beiträge zur deutschen Mythologie, Sitten- und Heimatskunde* (Vienna, 1866–1878), ii. 248; Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*[4] (Berlin, 1875–1878), iii. 464, No. 483.

[3] Above, p. 183.

[4] Above, p. 197.

may have dwindled into a traditionary rite of which the old meaning is forgotten.

Piercing or mutilating the ears from religious motives. Blood drawn from the ears as an offering to the dead.

The practice of piercing or mutilating the ears, which formed the starting-point of the foregoing discussion, has been observed from religious or superstitious motives on other occasions, and sometimes the blood drawn from the ears has been offered to a deity or to the dead. Thus, among the natives of the eastern islands of Torres Straits it was customary, on the death of a near relative, to cut the lobes of the ears of youths who had lately been initiated and of girls who had arrived at puberty, and to let the blood drip on the feet of the corpse "as a mark of pity or of sorrow for the deceased."[1] Similarly among the natives of New Caledonia, when a death has taken place, the nearest relations tear the lobes of their ears and inflict large burns on their arms and breasts.[2] Among the Kai of German New Guinea a mourner will express his grief with violent gestures and wild shouts, and snatching up a knife will make as if he would kill himself, but in fact he merely slits his ear, allows the blood to trickle over his body, and falls as if exhausted to the ground.[3] Here it seems as if the blood from the ears were offered as a substitute for the life of the mourner, in order to convince the ghost of the genuine sorrow felt at his decease and so to induce him to spare the survivors. In Hawaii, on the death of a king or chief, it used to be customary for people to cut one or both their ears and to mutilate themselves in other ways, as by knocking out some of their front teeth and tattooing black spots or lines on their tongues.[4]

Pieces of ears cut off by mourners among the Scythians and in parts of the Caucasus.

The Scythians in antiquity, when they mourned the death of a king, were wont to cut off pieces of their ears, gash their foreheads and noses, and run arrows through their left hands.[5] To this custom Plutarch probably alludes when he says that some barbarians in mourning were wont to cut

[1] *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits*, vi. (Cambridge, 1908) p. 154.

[2] Father Lambert, *Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* (Nouméa, 1900), p. 235.

[3] Ch. Keysser, "Aus dem Leben der Kaileute," in R. Neuhauss, *Deutsch Neu-Guinea*, iii. (Berlin, 1911) p. 80.

[4] William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, Second Edition (London, 1832–1836), iv. 176 *sq.*

[5] Herodotus iv. 71.

off their ears, noses, and other parts of their bodies, thinking thereby to please the dead.[1] In some parts of the Caucasus down to modern times, when a guardian survived his ward, he inherited some of the moveable property and horses of the deceased, but he was obliged to cut off half of each of his ears. The ears of the favourite steed of the dead man were also cut. Among the Koumuks of this region not only was the guardian of a prince bound to cut off the half of both his ears on the death of his ward, but the most confidential of the courtiers were forced to submit to the same mutilation. "Formerly the nurses were obliged to tear out their hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes, and then to be buried alive. For that purpose they were put in a perpendicular pit, their heads covered with pots in each of which there was a hole. In this state they were given food, but as they were obliged to remain there for several weeks, most of them died in consequence. Even at the present day all the women of the family assemble every day for ten weeks, strip themselves naked to the girdle, and tear their bodies with their nails. This ceremony took place at Kisliar while I was there, on the death of a young princess, daughter of prince Inal."[2]

Ancient Mexican custom of drawing blood from the ears as an offering to the gods.

No people appear to have cut their ears as a form of sacrifice more frequently than the ancient Mexicans. The occasions of offering the sacrifice and the gods to whom it was offered were many and various. Sometimes the blood was exacted from the priests alone, sometimes from the whole people, young and old, down to infants in the cradle. Not uncommonly the sacrifice was offered to the sun. For example, on a certain day all those who were born under a particular sign, men, women, and children, cut their ears and drew blood from them in honour of the sun, saying that by so doing they recreated the luminary.[3] Indeed, the Mexican priests are said to have offered blood from their ears every morning to the sun at his rising, while at the same time they decapitated quails, and holding up the

[1] Plutarch, *Consolatio ad Apollonium*, 22.

[2] Le Comte Jean Potocki, *Voyage dans les steps d'Astrakhan et du Caucase* (Paris, 1829), ii. 121-123.

[3] Bernardino de Sahagun, *Histoire Générale des Choses de la Nouvelle-Espagne*, traduite et annotée par D. Jourdanet et Remi Siméon (Paris, 1880), p. 242.

bleeding bodies said, "The sun is already risen. We know not how he will accomplish his course to-day. We know not whether some mishap will befall the poor world." Then addressing themselves directly to the sun, they prayed, saying, "Our master and lord, accomplish thy course in a way that shall be favourable to us."[1] Sometimes the Mexicans offered the blood of their ears to ensure their success in hunting deer.[2] Again, the fourth month of the Mexican year was called Hueitozoztli or "Great Watch," because, during that month, not only the priests but also the nobility and populace kept watch. They drew blood from their ears, eyebrows, nose, tongue, arms, and thighs, "to expiate the faults committed by their senses," and dipping leaves of the sword-grass in the blood they exposed them at the doors of their houses. In this way they prepared themselves for the festival of Centeotl, the goddess of maize.[3] But while such austerities were practised occasionally by the Mexican people in general, they were observed most frequently by the Mexican priests, who endured these sufferings vicariously for the public good. "The effusion of blood," we are told, "was frequent and daily with some of the priests, to which practice they gave the name of *Tlamacazqui*. They pierced themselves with the sharpest spines of the aloe, and bored several parts of their bodies, particularly their ears, lips, tongue, and the fat of their arms and legs. Through the holes which they made with these spines, they introduced pieces of cane, the first of which were small pieces, but every time this penitential suffering was repeated, a thicker piece was used. The blood which flowed from them was carefully collected in leaves of the plant acxojatl. They fixed the bloody spines in little balls of hay, which they exposed upon the battlements of the walls of the temple, to testify the penance which they did for the people. Those who exercised such severities upon themselves within the inclosure of the greater temple of Mexico, bathed themselves in a pond that was formed there, which from being always tinged with blood was called *Ezapan*."[4]

[1] B. de Sahagun, *op. cit.* p. 193.

[2] B. de Sahagun, *op. cit.* pp. 72, 144.

[3] F. S. Clavigero, *History of Mexico*, translated by Charles Cullen (London, 1807), i. 298.

[4] F. S. Clavigero, *History of Mexico*, i. 284 *sq.* For more evidence of the

Ancient Mexican custom of piercing the ears of children.

Further, "the Mexicans had also amongst them a kind of baptism, the which they did with ceremony, cutting the ears and members of young children new born, counterfeiting in some sort the circumcision of the Jews. This ceremony was done principally to the sons of kings and noblemen; presently upon their birth the priests did wash them, and did put a little sword in the right hand, and in the left a target. And to the children of the vulgar sort they put the marks of their offices, and to their daughters instruments to spin, knit, and labour. This ceremony continued four days, being made before some idol."[1] From other accounts we learn that the ceremony of boring the children's ears was not performed at birth, but at a festival which fell once in every four years, when the ears of all the children born since the last festival were pierced and rings inserted in them. The children of both sexes had to submit to the operation, and their parents on this occasion provided them with godfathers and godmothers, whom they called uncles and aunts, and who had to be present at the rite. At the same time they made an offering of flour, and as soon as a child had been operated on, it was led round a fire by way of lustration. Great, we are told, was the squalling of children on these occasions under the hands of the operators. Feasting and dancing filled up part of the day; the godparents carried their godchildren on their shoulders in the dance, and made them quaff wine from little cups. On being carried home, the children had to submit to another ceremony, which consisted in taking them by the temples and lifting them high up. This was supposed to promote their growth; hence one name for the festival was *izcalli*, which means "growth."[2]

The Mexican custom of piercing the ears of children associated with a ceremony to make them grow.

Why the Mexicans pierced the ears of all their children, we are not told; but since among them the ceremony of

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Mexican practice of piercing the ears in sacrifice see F. S. Clavigero, *op. cit.* i. 286; B. de Sahagun, *Histoire des Choses de la Nouvelle-Espagne*, pp. 60, 78, 87, 107, 150, 188, 194, 232.

[1] Joseph de Acosta, *The Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, translated by Edward Grimston (London, 1880), ii. 369 (Book V. chap. 27). I have modernized the old translator's spelling.

[2] B. de Sahagun, *Histoire des Choses de la Nouvelle-Espagne*, pp. 165 *sq.* Compare *id.*, pp. 76, 77; F. S. Clavigero, *History of Mexico*, i. 313.

piercing and drawing blood from the ears was a religious rite performed on many occasions by old and young, we may assume with a fair degree of probability that the same operation performed on children had also a religious or superstitious significance. The association of the rite with a ceremony avowedly intended to promote the growth of the children suggests that perhaps the cutting of the ears of the infants may have had a similar intention, though why the boring of holes in a child's ears should be supposed to make it grow faster, I confess myself unable to perceive. It may be worth while to observe that among some of the tribes of Central Australia the first ceremony of initiation undergone by a lad consists in being thrown up in the air, which is shortly followed or preceded by the boring of his nasal septum in order to enable him to wear a bone in the aperture. On these occasions the lads between ten and twelve years of age are assembled and are tossed, one by one, several times in the air by the men, who catch them as they fall, while the women dance round and round the group, swinging their arms and shouting loudly.[1] The reason for thus throwing the lads up is not mentioned by our authorities, but on the analogy of the Mexican rite we may conjecture that the intention is to make the lads grow tall by tossing them high in air.

In Futuna and some parts of New Guinea the piercing of the ears or noses of children is thought to secure the happiness of their souls in the other world

Whatever may have been the precise motive which has led many peoples to pierce the ears of their children, we may assume with some confidence that the custom rested originally on a superstition, though that superstition need not in every case have been the same. The natives of Futuna, an island of the New Hebrides in the South Pacific, used to bore the ears of their children and enlarge the aperture until a circular piece of wood, an inch and a quarter in diameter, could be inserted in it; but some people preferred to insert tortoise shell cut in strips or formed into chains. The custom, we are informed, was not simply ornamental but religious. The Futunese believed that the entrance to the spirit land was guarded by a god who lived

[1] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1899), pp. 214-218; compare *iid.*, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1904), pp. 337 *sq.*

in, or was represented by a great stone in the sea not far from the beach, and when any person whose ears had not been pierced in the usual way attempted to steal into the spirit world, the sentinel god rolled a stone on the top of the intruder. Hence young people were afraid to leave their ears unpierced.[1] Similarly the natives of Motu, in British New Guinea, who pierce their children's noses about the age of six years, believe that any child who dies with his or her nose unpierced will go to a bad place called Tageani in the other world, where there is little food and no betel-nut, whereas all who die with pierced noses go to a good place called Raka, where there is plenty to eat. Some say that the unfortunate child whose nose was unpierced in life had to go about in the spirit land with a creature like a slow-worm dangling from its nostrils. Hence in order to remedy, if possible, the sad destiny of their progeny in the other world, parents whose infants have died before the performance of the indispensable ceremony will have the operation performed on their dead bodies.[2]

The original motive for piercing the ears and noses of children was probably a superstition of some sort.

Yet we should probably err if we supposed that originally the ears and noses of children in these tribes were pierced for no other purpose than to secure for their departed spirits a more favourable reception or a higher rank among the dead. It seems more likely that both customs were instituted with some entirely different object, and that the supposed punishment for dying with ears or nose unpierced was an afterthought, which only occurred to the people when both practices had been so long established among them that any deviation from the one or the other must have appeared to them a criminal eccentricity deserving of reprobation in this world and of chastisement in the world to come. Thus these particular superstitions can hardly be held to throw light on the real origin of the customs of piercing the ears or noses of all members of a tribe. However, there is reason to think that the practice of piercing the septum of the nose, like that of piercing the lobe of the ear, was not at

[1] William Gunn, *The Gospel in Futuna* (London, etc., 1914), pp. 193 *sq.*

[2] James Chalmers, *Pioneering in New Guinea* (London, 1887), p. 168; C. G. Seligmann, *The Melanesians of British New Guinea* (Cambridge, 1910), p. 190.

first designed to be purely ornamental, but that it was intended either to guard against some danger or to secure some benefit which the measure was in reality powerless either to avert or to attain; in short, there is a certain amount of evidence that this particular mutilation was based on a superstition of some sort. Thus the aborigines of Australia are said to wear small bones or pieces of reed in their noses at times when they apprehend danger,[1] which implies that they regard the presence of the bone or reed in their nostrils as a protection. Again, in the Arunta and Ilpirra tribes of Central Australia, as soon as a boy's nose has been bored, he strips a piece of bark off a gum tree and throws it as far as he can in the direction of the camp where the spirit, of which his mother is believed to be the reincarnation, is said to have lived in the remote times to which these natives give the name of *Alcheringa*. This ceremony of bark-throwing has a special name, and the boy is told to perform it by men who stand to him in certain definite relationships, which include what we should call grandfather, father, father's brothers, and elder brothers. They tell him that the reason for throwing the bark is that it will lessen the pain and promote the healing of the wound in his nose. When the nose of a girl is bored, which is usually done by her husband very soon after she has passed into his possession, she fills a small wooden vessel with sand, and facing in the direction of the camp where the spirit of her mother is supposed to have dwelt in the far-off days of the *Alcheringa*, she executes a series of short jumps, keeping her feet close together and her legs stiff, while she moves the vessel as if she were winnowing seed, until she gradually empties it. After that she resumes her ordinary occupations. To explain the ceremony the natives say that a girl who should fail to perform it would be guilty of a grave offence against her mother.[2]

All customs of mutilating the human body probably

It can hardly be said that these ceremonies explain the real significance which the custom of piercing the nose possesses in the minds of the Australian aborigines. Yet the reference which they contain to the belief in reincarnation,

[1] Major T. L. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia*, Second Edition (London, 1839), ii. 345.

[2] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1899), p. 459.

originated in superstitions, of which the belief in reincarnation may have been one.

which is universal in these tribes,[1] may perhaps serve to connect this particular mutilation with the other and more serious mutilations of circumcision and subincision, which are performed on all male members of the tribes;[2] for there are some indications that circumcision and subincision also imply a reference to reincarnation, if they do not expressly aim at ensuring the rebirth of the young men on whom they are performed.[3] But the subject of these and indeed of all bodily mutilations practised by savages is still involved in great obscurity and uncertainty; we can only hope that future investigations may clear up what is at present one of the darkest places in the study of primitive man. If I may hazard a conjecture on so difficult a problem, I venture to anticipate that all customs of mangling and maiming the human frame will be found to have originated in some form or other of superstition, and that among the superstitions, to which these extraordinary practices owe their rise and popularity, the belief in reincarnation has been not the least potent.

Custom of cutting off the ears of animals in sacrifice.

Before dismissing the practice of piercing the human ear it may not be out of place to notice a few cases of cutting off the ears of animals in sacrifice. For example, among the Oraons of Bengal, if a woman gets up on the thatch of a house, the people anticipate disease and death to some inmate or inmates of the house and misfortune to the village in general, and a solemn ceremony has to be performed in order to avert the threatened calamity. "In former times, it is said, one of the ears of the offending woman used to be cut off. But in our days it is only when a dog or a goat gets up on the roof of a house that one of its ears is cut off. It is believed that the sight of the blood of the severed ear serves to appease the wrath of the offended spirit."[4] Some of the wild tribes of Formosa, who attribute an epidemic of smallpox

[1] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1899), pp. 123 *sqq.*; *iid.*, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1904), pp. xi. 145, 174.

[2] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 218 *sqq.*

[3] I have collected and discussed the evidence in *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, i. 94 *sqq.* (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part i.).

[4] Sarat Chandra Roy, *The Oraons of Chota Nagpur* (Ranchi, 1915), p. 273.

to the agency of a devil, are said to conjure the foul fiend into a pig and then to cut off the animal's ears and burn them, imagining that in this way they render their spiritual foe incapable of further mischief.[1] Among the Tumbukas of British Central Africa, when a party of hunters had killed an elephant, they used to cut off one of its ears and carry it to the nearest of the sacred wild-fig trees, under which it was their custom to erect tiny huts for the accommodation of ancestral spirits. To one of these spirits they offered the ear of the elephant at the foot of the tree.[2] Among the Wawanga, of the Elgon district in British East Africa, it is a common custom to consecrate a young bull calf by cutting off its ears and depositing them at certain holy stones, which are set up in honour of male ancestors. From that time onward the bull is a kind of sacred beast, and were it lost or stolen some dire calamity would be expected to befall the family. When the bull is full grown, the family assemble and sacrifice the animal to the ancestral spirits, pouring out its blood at the sacred stones.[3] Once more, among the Arabs of Moab, when an epidemic has broken out in a flock of sheep or goats, the owner leads the flock to the tomb of a saint (*wely*) and makes the animals walk round it. The first of them to approach the tomb, or to mount on it, is taken and sacrificed, because the Arabs say that the saint has chosen the animal and drawn it to himself. The ears of the sheep or goat are at once cut off and the blood sprinkled on the tomb; but if the camp is at a distance, the victim is conducted thither to be sacrificed under the tent.[4]

The Hebrew custom of boring a servant's ear compared with a custom observed by the Ewe negroes to prevent a slave from running away.

The Hebrew custom of boring the ear of a servant who had resolved not to quit his master, may be compared with a custom observed by the Ewe negroes of Togoland in West Africa when they desire to prevent a slave from running away from them. For that purpose the master brings the

[1] W. Müller, "Über die Wildenstämme der Insel Formosa," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, xlii. (1910) p. 237.

[2] Donald Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People* (London, 1914), p. 137. As to the sacred fig trees and the huts for the spirits, see *id.*, pp. 128 *sq.*

[3] Hon. Kenneth R. Dundas, "The Wawanga and other tribes of the Elgon District, British East Africa," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) pp. 31 *sq.*

[4] Antonin Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab* (Paris, 1908), pp. 358 *sq.*

slave before a fetish named Nanyo. There the priest pares the nails of the slave's fingers and toes, shears some of the hair of his head, and buries the parings of the nails and the shorn hair, along with a fetish mark, in the earth. After that the slave gives a promise that he will not run away, and to confirm him in this good resolution the priest administers to him a draught of fetish water, which is believed to possess the virtue of killing the man out of hand if he were to break his pledged word by deserting his master.[1] Here the deposition of the severed hair and nails with the fetish seems clearly intended to give the fetish the means of injuring the slave by working magic on these portions of his person; for it is a common article of the magical creed that a man can be harmed sympathetically through any harm done to his cut nails and hair.[2] On this principle the hair and nails deposited with the fetish serve as a surety or bail for the slave, that he will not run away. Exactly in the same way among the Nandi of British East Africa, "to ensure a prisoner not attempting to escape the captor shaves his head and keeps the hair, thus placing him at the mercy of his magic."[3] In the light of these African customs we may conjecture that among the Hebrews the intention of pinning a servant's ear to the doorpost either of his master's house or of the sanctuary was to give his master or the deity complete magical control over the man by means of his blood which adhered to the doorpost. We have seen that there is some doubt whether the ceremony was performed at the door of the master's house or at the door of the sanctuary, the form of the commandment in Deuteronomy favouring the former interpretation, and the form of the commandment in the older Book of the Covenant favouring the latter interpretation. The parallelism of the Ewe custom, so far as it goes, supports the view that the

The Hebrew custom perhaps intended to give the master complete magical control over his servant by means of the blood on the doorpost.

[1] Lieutenant Herold, "Bericht betreffend religiöse Anschauungen und Gebräuche der deutschen Ewe-Neger," *Mittheilungen von Forschungsreisenden und Gelehrten aus den Deutschen Schutzgebieten*, v. Heft 4 (Berlin, 1892), pp. 147 *sq.*

[2] *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, pp. 267 *sqq.* (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part ii.).

[3] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi, their Language and Folk-lore* (Oxford, 1909), pp. 74 *sq.*, compare *id.*, p. 30, "When a prisoner of war is taken, his head is shaved by his captor and his hair kept until he is ransomed. The hair is returned with the prisoner."

piercing of the servant's ear was done not at the master's house but at the sanctuary; for among the Ewe negroes the slave is similarly taken to the shrine of the fetish, and it is the fetish priest, and not the man's master, who performs the ceremony of cutting the hair and nails and administering the draught which is supposed to act as a fresh and binding pledge of the slave's fidelity. On the strength of this analogy we may surmise that among the Hebrews the boring of a servant's ear was originally performed as a solemn religious or magical rite at the sanctuary, even though in later days it may have degenerated into a simple domestic ceremony performed by the master at his own house and interpreted in a purely symbolical sense.

Among the Wolofs a slave cuts off a piece of the ear of the master whom he desires to serve.

Among other tribes of West Africa the mutilation of an ear is actually performed as a means of ensuring the permanent attachment of a slave to his master, but in this case, curiously enough, it is the ear, not of the slave, but of the master that is mutilated. We read that "among the Wolofs, as among all the peoples of Senegambia and even among the Moors on the right bank of the river, there is observed a strange custom which at first seems very surprising. A slave who wishes to escape from a master whom he dislikes, chooses in his own mind some one whose captive he wishes to become and cuts off a piece of his ear. If he cannot make his way to the master whom he desires, he contents himself with cutting the ear of the man's child or even of his horse, and from that moment his old owner has not the least right over him; the slave becomes the property of him whose blood he has shed. The moral intention of the custom is plain enough; the captive seems thus to say that he prefers to expose himself to the just wrath of him whom he has offended rather than remain at the mercy of a bad and capricious master; and as his new owner has a right of reselling him to his old master for a variable price, called 'the price of blood,' we can understand that the captive is bound to behave well, lest he should revert to the possession of him from whom he wished to flee."[1]

The explanation which the writer offers of the custom ap-

[1] L. J. B. Bérenger-Féraud, *Les Peuplades de la Sénégambie* (Paris, 1879), p. 59.

The shedding of the blood is perhaps thought to establish a blood-bond between master and slave.

pears accommodated rather to European than to African ideas. More probably, perhaps, the shedding of his new master's blood is supposed either to establish a blood relationship between the slave and his proprietor or to give the slave at all events a certain magical control over his master by means of the blood which he has drawn from him. On this latter interpretation the ceremony is to some extent the converse of the Hebrew rite. The Hebrew law contemplates the case of a master who desires to prevent his slave from running away, and for that purpose draws blood from the slave's ear as a guarantee of his fidelity; the African rule contemplates the case of a slave who desires to prevent his master from giving him up, and for that purpose draws blood from his master's ear as a guarantee of his protection. But in each case the ear pierced is that of the party to the covenant whose loyalty the other party has some reason to distrust, and whom accordingly he seeks to bind by a tie of blood.

Even the blood of a horse may suffice to establish such a bond.

To this interpretation of the Wolof custom it may be objected that the cutting of a horse's ear is permitted as a substitute in cases where the slave cannot cut the ear either of his new master or of his master's child. How, it may pertinently be asked, can you establish a blood relationship with a man by spilling the blood of his horse? To this it may perhaps be answered that though the horse's blood could hardly be thought to establish a blood relationship with the owner, it might possibly be supposed to give the slave a magical control over him, which would answer the same purpose of securing him against the caprice and tyranny of his master; since the field over which magical influence can be exerted to a man's prejudice is commonly held to be a very wide one, embracing his personal possessions as well as the severed parts of his body.[1]

Among the Toradjas of Celebes a slave may transfer himself to a new master by cutting

If this explanation of the Wolof custom should be thought too subtle, a simpler and perhaps more probable one is suggested by a parallel usage of the Bare'e-speaking Toradjas of Central Celebes. Among these people, we are informed, slaves used to possess a remarkable privilege which ensured them against ill-usage at the hands of their masters. When

[1] For many examples see E. S. Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus* (London, 1894–1896), ii. 86 *sqq.*

a slave was not well treated, he would abandon his master and seek refuge in the house of another, where he damaged or destroyed some article of property. His old master soon followed him thither and demanded his surrender. But his new master refused to give up the runaway till he had received compensation from the old master for the damage or destruction wrought by the slave; and this compensation usually consisted in a buffalo. Thus it was to a master's interest to treat his slaves leniently, since he could be obliged to pay for any damages to the doing of which his severity might goad them. But if a slave was resolved never to return to his old master, on reaching the house of the man into whose service he desired to enter, he did not content himself with damaging or destroying a single article of property, but laid about him with such indiscriminate violence that he soon ran up a bill for damages amounting to five buffaloes or even more. So heavy a bill his old master seldom thought it worth his while to discharge for the sake of getting back on his hands an unwilling slave, who might play him the same trick another day. Accordingly, the slave's old master acquiesced in the loss of his services, and his new master accepted those services as a compensation for the ravages which the servant had committed in his house. However, we are told that the surest measure which a slave could adopt for the purpose of establishing himself irretrievably in the house of a new master was to cut off a lock of hair from a member of the family, generally one of the master's children, and to throw it on the fire before the person from whom the hair was abstracted could put himself on his guard or thwart the intention of his assailant. This act of aggression, if successfully perpetrated, was deemed so deep an insult that no compensation could wipe it out; and the slave therefore remained permanently with his new master.[1]

off and burning a lock of hair from the head of some member of that master's family.

Here the cutting of a lock of hair from some member of the new master's family appears to be the equivalent of the Wolof practice of cutting the ear either of the new master himself or of one of his children, and the effect of the act in both cases is precisely the same, namely, to render the

In these customs the use of the blood or hair may be based on the principle of sympathetic magic.

[1] N. Adriani en Alb. C. Kruijt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes* (Batavia, 1912–1914), i. 198 *sq.*

return of the slave to his old master impossible. But though in Senegambia and Celebes these modes of transferring a slave permanently to a new master are described as if they rested on a purely economic consideration of injury done to property or honour, we may suspect that at bottom both are magical, the blood of the ear in the one case and the hair of the head in the other forming the real guarantee on which the slave relies for security of tenure in his new home, since by means of the blood or the hair he can work magic on his master, and thus through the influence of fear can restrain him from exercising his rights of ownership in an arbitrary or cruel manner. However, this explanation is open to the objection that the slave does not preserve the lock of hair, as we should expect him to do, but on the contrary destroys it by throwing it on the fire. If this objection is not fatal to the theory, we must apparently conclude that savage man, like his civilized brother, does not invariably regulate his actions in conformity with the laws of an inflexible logic.

Toradja custom of cutting off a piece of a buffalo's ear and keeping it to prevent the animal from straying.

The suspicion of a magical basis underlying both these primitive forms of conveyancing is confirmed, so far as the Toradjas of Celebes are concerned, by the explanation which some of them give of a custom observed at the earmarking of cattle. It is their practice to cut off a piece from one or both ears of every buffalo calf at birth, and the pieces of ears are dried and hung from the roof. Asked why they keep these fragments of their buffaloes, most of the people can give no reason at all; but "some say that it is to prevent the buffaloes from straying (a part of the animal, to wit the tip of the ear, attracts the whole buffalo)."[1] This explanation of the practice is probably the true one; certainly it fits exactly into that system of sympathetic magic which at a certain stage of evolution has moulded man's thought and cast the fluid material of custom into many quaint and curious shapes. If that is so, we may conclude, with a fair degree of probability, that the process which a modern Toradja adopts to prevent his buffalo from straying is essentially of the same sort as the process which an ancient

[1] N. Adriani en Alb. C. Kruijt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes* (Batavia, 1912–1914), ii. 173 *sq.*

Hebrew adopted to prevent his servant from running away: in both we may detect an old magical rite which was thought to give a master as firm a hold on his man and on his beast as if he actually held both of them by the ear.

The Hebrew custom of piercing a servant's ear explained by the laws of primitive logic.

Thus it appears that according to the laws of primitive logic you can ensure your control of a man by the simple process of cutting his ear and drawing a few drops of his blood. This conception may explain the treatment of a Hebrew slave who professed his willingness to abide with his master after his legal term of servitude had expired, but on whom his master might not unnaturally desire to possess some securer hold than the slave's own profession of good will and attachment. The same notion of a relation of dependence established by means of an incision in the ears may possibly illustrate an obscure passage in a psalm, where the psalmist, addressing the deity, declares, "Ears hast thou dug (or pierced) for me."[1] Perhaps by this declaration the worshipper desires to express his absolute submission to the divine will, employing for that purpose a metaphor borrowed from the proceeding by which in ordinary life a master bound a servant to himself by a tie of the closest and most enduring nature.

[1] Psalm xl. 6, Revised Version, marginal reading. The Hebrew is, אָזְנַיִם כָּרִיתָ לִי. The rendering, "Mine ears hast thou opened" (Authorized and Revised Versions) is rather a paraphrase than a translation of the sentence.

CHAPTER IV

CUTTINGS FOR THE DEAD

Ancient Hebrew custom of cutting the body and shearing the hair in token of mourning for the dead.

IN ancient Israel mourners were accustomed to testify their sorrow for the death of friends by cutting their own bodies and shearing part of their hair so as to make bald patches on their heads. Foretelling the desolation which was to come upon the land of Judah, the prophet Jeremiah describes how the people would die, and how there would be none to bury them or to perform the usual rites of mourning. "Both great and small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them."[1] Again, we read in Jeremiah how, after the Jews had been carried away into captivity by King Nebuchadnezzar, "there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, even fourscore men, having their beards shaven and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with oblations and frankincense in their hand, to bring them to the house of the Lord."[2] To mark their sorrow for the great calamity which had befallen Judah and Jerusalem, these pious pilgrims assumed the garb and attributes of the deepest mourning. The practice of making bald the head, though not that of cutting the body, is mentioned also by earlier prophets among the ordinary tokens of grief which were permitted and even enjoined by religion. Thus Amos, the earliest of the prophets whose writings have come down to us, proclaims the doom of Israel in the name of the Lord, "I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every

[1] Jeremiah xvi. 6.

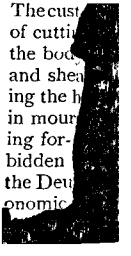
[2] Jeremiah xli. 5.

head; and I will make it as the mourning for an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day."[1] Again, we read in Isaiah that "in that day did the Lord, the Lord of hosts, call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth."[2] And Micah, prophesying the calamities which were to overtake the southern kingdom, bids the inhabitants anticipate their woes by shaving themselves like mourners: "Make thee bald, and poll thee for the children of thy delight: enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee."[3] The comparison is here not with the eagle, as the English Version has it, but with the great griffon-vulture, which has the neck and head bald and covered with down, a characteristic which no eagle shares with it.[4] And even after these prophecies had been fulfilled by the Babylonian conquest of Judah, the prophet Ezekiel could still write in exile that "they shall also gird themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; and shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads."[5]

Philistine and Moabite custom of cutting the body and shearing the hair in mourning for the dead.

The same customs of cutting the flesh and shaving part of the head in mourning appear to have been common to the Jews with their neighbours, the Philistines and the Moabites. Thus Jeremiah says, "Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is brought to nought, the remnant of their valley; how long wilt thou cut thyself?"[6] And speaking of the desolation of Moab, the same prophet declares, "Every head is bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands are cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth. On all the housetops of Moab and in the streets thereof there is lamentation everywhere."[7] To the same effect Isaiah writes that "Moab howleth over Nebo, and over Medeba: on all their heads is baldness, every beard is cut off. In their streets they gird themselves with sackcloth: on their housetops, and in their broad places, every one howleth, weeping abundantly."[8]

Yet in time these observances, long practised without offence by Israelites in mourning, came to be viewed as barbarous and heathenish, and as such they were forbidden



[1] Amos viii. 10.
[2] Isaiah xxii. 12.
[3] Micah i. 16.
[4] H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*, Ninth Edition (London, 1898), p. 173.
[5] Ezekiel vii. 18.
[6] Jeremiah xlvii. 5.
[7] Jeremiah xlviii. 37 *sq.*
[8] Isaiah xv. 2 *sq.*

in the codes of law which were framed near the end of the Jewish monarchy, and during or after the Babylonian captivity. Thus in the Deuteronomic code, which was promulgated at Jerusalem in 621 B.C., about a generation before the conquest, we read that "Ye are the children of the Lord your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead. For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth."[1] Here the prohibition is based upon the peculiar religious position which Israel occupies as the chosen people of Jehovah, and the nation is exhorted to distinguish itself by abstinence from certain extravagant forms of mourning, in which it had hitherto indulged without sin, and which were still observed by the pagan nations around it. So far as we can judge, the reform originated in a growing refinement of sentiment, which revolted against such extravagant expressions of sorrow as repugnant alike to good taste and to humanity; but the reformer clothed his precept, as usual, in the garb of religion, not from any deliberate considerations of policy, but merely because, in accordance with the ideas of his time, he could conceive no other ultimate sanction for human conduct than the fear of God.

The custom of cutting the body and shearing the hair in mourning forbidden by the Levitical code.

In the Levitical code, composed during or after the Exile, the same prohibitions are repeated. "Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard. Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord."[2] Yet the lawgiver seems to have felt that it might not be easy by a stroke of the pen to eradicate practices which were deeply ingrained in the popular mind and had long been regarded as innocent; for a little farther on, as if hopeless of weaning the whole people from their old fashion of mourning, he insists that at least the priests shall absolutely renounce it: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say unto them, There shall none defile himself for the dead among his people, except for his kin. . . . He shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself. They shall not make

[1] Deuteronomy xiv. 1 *sq.* [2] Leviticus xix. 27 *sq.*

baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh. They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God."[1] Any doubts which the lawgiver may have entertained as to the complete efficacy of the remedy which he applied to the evil were justified by the event; for many centuries after his time Jerome informs us that some Jews still made cuttings in their arms and bald places on their heads in token of mourning for the dead.[2]

Both customs common in mourning throughout the world.

The customs of cropping or shaving the hair and cutting or mutilating the body in mourning have been very widespread among mankind. In the preceding chapter I gave some instances of both usages, with particular reference to the cutting or mutilation of the ears and hands. I propose now to illustrate both practices more fully and to inquire into their meaning.[3] In doing so I shall pay attention chiefly to the custom of wounding, scarifying, or lacerating the body as the more remarkable and mysterious of the two.

Arab custom of scratching the face and shearing the hair in mourning.

Among Semitic peoples the ancient Arabs, like the ancient Jews, practised both customs. Arab women in mourning rent their upper garments, scratched their faces and breasts with their nails, beat and bruised themselves with their shoes, and cut off their hair. When the great warrior Chalid ben al Valid died, there was not a single woman of his tribe, the Banu Mugira, who did not shear her locks and lay them on his grave.[4] To this day similar practices are in vogue among the Arabs of Moab. As soon as a death has taken place, the women of the family scratch their faces to the effusion of blood and rend their robes to the waist.[5] And if the

[1] Leviticus xxi. 1-5.

[2] Jerome, *Commentary on Jeremiah*, xvi. 6 (Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, xxiv. col. 782), "*Mos hic fuit apud veteres, et usque hodie in quibusdam permanet Judaeorum, ut in luctibus incidant lacertos, et calvitium faciant, quod Job fecisse legimus.*"

[3] See above, pp. 227 *sqq.* Both practices have been described and illustrated by Richard Andree, *Ethnographische Parallelen und Vergleiche* (Stuttgart, 1878), pp. 147-152. The custom of cutting the hair as a religious or superstitious rite has been discussed by G. A. Wilken in a learned and elaborate monograph. See G. A. Wilken, "Über Das Haaropfer und undere Trauergebräuche bei den Völkern Indonesiens," *De verspreide Geschriften* (The Hague, 1912), iii. 399-550.

[4] J. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*[2] (Berlin, 1897), pp. 181, 182; I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle a. S., 1888-1890), i. 248; G. Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben*[2] (Berlin, 1897), pp. 139 *sqq.*

[5] Antonin Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab* (Paris, 1908), p. 96; Selah Merrill, *East of the Jordan*,

deceased was a husband, a father, or other near relation, they cut off their long tresses and spread them out on the grave or wind them about the headstone. Or they insert two stakes in the earth, one at the head and the other at the foot of the grave, and join them by a string, to which they attach their shorn locks.[1]

Ancient Greek custom of scratching the face and shearing the hair in mourning.

Similarly in ancient Greece women in mourning for near and dear relatives cut off their hair and scratched their cheeks, and sometimes their necks, with their nails till they bled. Greek men also shore their hair as a token of sorrow and respect for the dead. Homer tells how the Greek warriors before Troy covered the corpse of Patroclus with their shorn tresses, and how Achilles laid in the hand of his dead friend the lock of hair which his father Peleus had vowed that his son should dedicate to the river Sperchius whenever he returned home from the war.[3] So Orestes is said to have laid a lock of his hair on the tomb of his murdered father Agamemnon.[4] But the humane legislation of Solon at Athens, like the humane legislation of Deuteronomy at Jerusalem, forbade the barbarous custom of scratching and scarifying the person in mourning;[5] and though the practice of shearing the hair in honour of the dead appears not to have been expressly prohibited by law, it perhaps also fell into abeyance in Greece under the influence of advancing civilization; at least it is significant that both these modes of manifesting distress for the loss of relations and friends are known to us chiefly from the writings of poets who depicted the life and manners of the heroic age, which lay far behind them in the past.

Assyrian, Armenian, and Roman custom of scratching the face in mourning.

Assyrian and Armenian women in antiquity were also

a Record of Travel and Observation in the Countries of Moab, Gilead, and Bashan (London, 1881), p. 511. The custom of scratching the face seems to be confined to the Arabs of Belqa.

[1] A. Jaussen, *op. cit.* p. 94.

[2] Euripides, *Electra*, 145 *sqq.*, *Hecuba*, 650 *sqq.*; Hesiod, *Shield of Hercules*, 242 *sq.*; *Anthologia Graeca*, vii. 487; Lucian, *De luctu*, 12. Compare Ovid, *Metamorph.* xiii. 427 *sq.*, where the poet represents the aged Hecuba laying one of her grey locks on the grave of Hector. Elsewhere (*Heroides*, ix. 91 *sq.*, 115 *sq.*) Ovid refers to the custom of women scratching their cheeks in mourning and offering locks of their hair at the grave; but we cannot say whether he is referring to Greek or Roman usage.

[3] Homer, *Iliad*, xxiii. 135-153.

[4] Aeschylus, *Choëphor.* 4 *sqq.*, 167 *sqq.*; Sophocles, *Electra*, 51-53, 900 *sq.*; Euripides, *Electra*, 90 *sq.*, 513 *sqq.*

[5] Plutarch, *Solon*, 21.

wont to scratch their cheeks in token of sorrow, as we learn from Xenophon,[1] who may have witnessed these demonstrations of grief on that retreat of the Ten Thousand which he shared as a soldier and immortalized as a writer. The same custom was not unknown in ancient Rome; for one of the laws of the Ten Tables, based on the legislation of Solon, forbade women to lacerate their cheeks with their nails in mourning.[2] The learned Roman antiquary Varro held that the essence of the custom consisted in an offering of blood to the dead, the blood drawn from the cheeks of the women being an imperfect substitute for the blood of captives or gladiators sacrificed at the grave.[3] The usages of modern savages, as we shall see presently, confirm to some extent this interpretation of the rite. Virgil represents Anna disfiguring her face with her nails and beating her breasts with her fists at the tidings of the death of her sister Dido on the pyre;[4] but whether in this description the poet had in mind the Carthaginian or the old Roman practice of mourners may be doubted.

Cropping the hair and gashing the face or body in mourning among the Scythians, Huns, Slavs, and the Mingrelians and Ossetes of the Caucasus.

When they mourned the death of a king, the ancient Scythians cropped their hair all round their heads, made incisions in their arms, lacerated their foreheads and noses, cut off pieces of their ears, and thrust arrows through their left hands.[5] Among the Huns it was customary for mourners to gash their faces and crop their hair; it was thus that Attila was mourned, "not with womanish lamentations and tears, but with the blood of men."[6] "In all Slavonic countries great stress has from time immemorial been laid on loud expressions of grief for the dead. These were formerly attended by laceration of the faces of the mourners, a custom still preserved among some of the inhabitants of Dalmatia and Montenegro."[7] Among the Mingrelians of the Caucasus, when a death has taken place in a house, the mourners scratch

[1] Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, iii. 1. 13, iii. 3. 67.

[2] Cicero, *De legibus*, ii. 23. 59; Festus, *De verborum significatione*, ed. C. O. Müller (Leipsic, 1839), p. 273, *s.v.* "Radere"; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xi. 157; *Fontes Juris Romani Antiqui*, ed. C. G. Bruns, septimum edidit O. Gradenwitz (Tübingen, 1909), p. 36.

[3] Servius on Virgil, *Aen.* iii. 67 and xii. 606.

[4] Virgil, *Aen.* iv. 672 *sq.*

[5] Herodotus iv. 71.

[6] Jordanes, *Getica*, xlix. 255, p. 124, ed. Th. Mommsen (Berlin, 1882).

[7] W. R. S. Ralston, *The Songs of Russian People*, Second Edition (London, 1872), p. 316.

their faces and tear out their hair;[1] according to one account they shave their faces entirely, including their eyebrows.[2] However, from another report it would seem that only the women indulge in these demonstrations of grief. Assembled in the chamber of death, the widow and the nearest female relations of the deceased abandon themselves to the vehemence, or at all events to the display, of their sorrow, wrenching out their hair, rending their faces and breasts, and remonstrating with the dead man on his undutiful conduct in dying. The hair which the widow tears from her head on this occasion is afterwards deposited by her in the coffin.[3] Among the Ossetes of the Caucasus on similar occasions the relatives assemble: the men bare their heads and hips, and lash themselves with whips till the blood streams forth; the women scratch their faces, bite their arms, wrench out their hair, and beat their breasts with lamentable howls.[4]

Custom of cutting the body and shearing the hair in mourning among the natives of Africa.

In Africa the custom of cutting the body in mourning, apart from the reported practice of lopping off finger-joints,[5] appears to be comparatively rare. Among the Abyssinians, in deep mourning for a blood relation, it is customary to shear the hair, strew ashes on the head, and scratch the skin of the temples till the blood flows.[6] When a death has taken place among the Wanika of East Africa, the relations and friends assemble, lament loudly, poll their heads, and scratch their faces.[7] Among the Kissi, a tribe on the border of Liberia, women in mourning cover their bodies, and especially their hair, with a thick coating of mud, and scratch their faces and their breasts with their nails.[8] In some Kafir tribes of South Africa a widow used to be secluded in a solitary place for a month after her husband's

[1] A. Lamberti, "Relation de la Colchide ou Mingrellie," *Recueil de Voyages au Nord*, vii. (Amsterdam, 1725), p. 153.

[2] J. M. Zampi, "Relation de la Colchide et de la Mingrellie," *Recueil de Voyages au Nord*, vii. (Amsterdam, 1725) p. 221.

[3] J. Mourier, "L'état religieux de la Mingrélie," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, xvi. (Paris, 1887) pp. 90, 93.

[4] Julius von Klaproth, *Reise in den Kaukasus und nach Georgien* (Halle and Berlin, 1814), ii. 604 *sq.*

[5] See above, pp. 230 *sq.*

[6] E. Rüppell, *Reise in Abyssinien* (Frankfort-on-Main, 1838–1840), ii. 57.

[7] J. L. Krapf, *Reisen in Ost-Afrika* (Kornthal and Stuttgart, 1858), i. 325.

[8] Dr. H. Néel, "Note sur deux peuplades de la frontière Libérienne, les Kissi et les Toma," *L'Anthropologie*, xxiv. (Paris, 1913) p. 458.

death, and before she returned home at the expiration of that period she had to throw her clothes away, wash her whole body, and lacerate her breast, arms, and legs with sharp stones.[1] When game was very scarce, certain Basuto tribes, which lived partly by the chase, were wont to assemble and invoke the spirit of a famous dead chief and other ancestral deities. At these ceremonies they cut themselves with knives, rolled in ashes, and uttered piercing cries. They also joined in religious dances, chanted plaintive airs, and gave vent to loud lamentations. After spending a whole day and night in wailing and prayer, they dispersed next morning to scour the country in search of the game which they confidently expected the ghosts or gods would send in answer to their fervent intercession.[2] However, these Basuto ceremonies, in spite of their mournful character, appear to have been designed rather to move the compassion of dead ancestors than to lament their death; hence they do not properly belong to the class of mourning customs. They may rather be compared with the frenzied rites of the Canaanite priests of Baal, who hacked themselves with knives and called aloud on their god to display his power by sending rain in time of drought.[3] Similarly the Israelites themselves in seasons of dearth seem to have cut their bodies with knives in order to move the pity of their god and persuade him to save the withering corn and the fading vines.[4]

Laceration of the body and cutting of the hair in mourning among the Indian tribes of North-Western America.

On the other hand, the laceration of the body in mourning, if rarely practised in Africa, was common among the Indian tribes of North America. Thus on the death of a

[1] L. Alberti, *De Kaffers aan de Zuidkust van Afrika* (Amsterdam, 1910), p. 201; H. Lichtenstein, *Reisen im südlichen Africa* (Berlin, 1811–1812), i. 421 *sq.*; Stephen Kay, *Travels and Researches in Caffraria* (London, 1833), pp. 199 *sq.*

[2] T. Arbousset et F. Daumas, *Relation d'un Voyage d'Exploration au Nord-est de la Colonie du Cap de Bonne-Espérance* (Paris, 1842), pp. 549 *sq.*

[3] 1 Kings xviii. 26-28.

[4] Hosea vii. 14, where for "they assemble themselves for corn and wine" we should probably read "they cut themselves for corn and wine" with the Revised Version, margin, approved by T. K. Cheyne (*Hosea*, Cambridge, 1899, p. 85) and by W. Nowack (in R. Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*, Leipsic, 1905–1906, ii. 837). The change of reading, which is very slight in the Hebrew (יִתְגּוֹדָדוּ for יִתְגּוֹרָרוּ), is supported by twelve Hebrew manuscripts and by the Septuagint, ἐπὶ σίτῳ καὶ οἴνῳ κατετέμνοντο. Compare *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, by Fr. Brown, S. R. Driver, and Ch. A. Briggs (Oxford, 1906), p. 151, *s.v.* גָּדַד.

relative the Tinneh or Déné Indians of North-Western America used to make incisions in their flesh, cut off their hair, rend their garments, and roll in the dust.[1] Again, on the occasion of a death among the Knisteneaux or Crees, who ranged over a vast extent of territory in Western Canada, "great lamentations are made, and if the departed person is very much regretted the near relations cut off their hair, pierce the fleshy part of their thighs and arms with arrows, knives, etc., and blacken their faces with charcoal."[2] Among the Kyganis, a branch of the Thlinkéet or Tlingit Indians of Alaska, while a body was burning on the funeral pyre, the assembled kinsfolk used to torture themselves mercilessly, slashing and lacerating their arms, thumping their faces with stones, and so forth. On these self-inflicted torments they prided themselves not a little. Other Thlinkeet Indians on these melancholy occasions contented themselves with burning or singeing their hair by thrusting their heads into the flames of the blazing pyre; while others, still more discreet or less affectionate, merely cut their hair short and blackened their faces with the ashes of the deceased.[3]

Laceration of the body and cutting of the hair in mourning among the Indians of Washington and Oregon States.

Among the Flathead Indians of Washington State it was customary for the bravest of the men and women ceremonially to bewail the death of a warrior by cutting out pieces of their own flesh and casting them with roots into the fire. And among the Indians of this region, "in case of a tribal disaster, as the death of a prominent chief, or the killing of a band of warriors by a hostile tribe, all indulge in the most frantic demonstrations, tearing the hair, lacerating the flesh with flints, often inflicting serious injury."[4] With the Chinpoks and other Indian tribes of the Oregon or Columbia River it was customary for the relations of a deceased person to

[1] E. Petitot, *Monographie des Dènè-Dindjié* (Paris, 1876), p. 61.

[2] Alexander Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal through the Continent of North America* (London, 1801), p. xcviii.

[3] H. J. Holmberg, "Ueber die Völker des Russischen Amerika," *Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae*, iv. (Helsingfors, 1856), p. 324. Compare William H. Dall, *Alaska and its Resources* (London, 1870), p. 417; H. H. Bancroft, *The Native Races of the Pacific States* (London, 1875–1876), i. 173. As to the relationship of the Kyganis to the Thlinkeet see W. H. Dall, "Tribes of the Extreme Northwest," *Contributions to North American Ethnology*, i. (Washington, 1877) p. 39.

[4] H. H. Bancroft, *The Native Races of the Pacific States*, i. 288.

destroy his property, to cut their hair, and to disfigure and wound their bodies.[1] "To have seen those savages streaming all over with blood, one would suppose they could never have survived such acts of cruelty inflicted on themselves; but such wounds, although bad, are not dangerous. To inflict these wounds on himself, the savage takes hold of any part of his skin, between his forefinger and thumb, draws it out to the stretch, and then runs a knife through it, between the hand and the flesh, which leaves, when the skin resumes its former place, two unsightly gashes, resembling ball holes, out of which the blood issues freely. With such wounds, and sometimes others of a more serious nature, the near relations of the deceased completely disfigure themselves."[2]

Laceration of the body in mourning among the Indians of California.

Among the Indians of the Californian peninsula, "when a death has taken place, those who want to show the relations of the deceased their respect for the latter lie in wait for these people, and if they pass they come out from their hiding-place, almost creeping, and intonate a mournful, plaintive *hu, hu, hu!* wounding their heads with pointed, sharp stones, until the blood flows down to their shoulders. Although this barbarous custom has frequently been interdicted, they are unwilling to discontinue it."[3] Among the Gallinomeras, a branch of the Pomo Indians, who inhabit the valley of the Russian River in California, "as soon as life is extinct they lay the body decently on the funeral pyre, and the torch is applied. The weird and hideous scenes which ensue, the screams, the blood-curdling ululations, the self-lacerations they perform during the burning are too terrible to be described. Joseph Fitch says he has seen an Indian become so frenzied that he would rush up to the blazing pyre, snatch from the body a handful of burning flesh and devour

[1] Alexander Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River* (London, 1849), p. 97.

[2] Alexander Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West* (London, 1855), i. 234, compare ii. 139. The description seems to apply in particular to the Nez Percé Indians of Washington State.

[3] Jacob Baegert, "An Account of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Californian Peninsula," *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution for the year 1864.* (Washington, 1865), p. 387. The writer was a German Jesuit missionary, who lived among these Indians for seventeen years during the second half of the eighteenth century. The flock, if we may trust the shepherd's account, consisted for the most part of very black sheep.

Hair of mourners burnt on pyre.

it."[1] In some tribes of Californian Indians the nearest relations cut off their hair and throw it on the burning pyre, while they beat their bodies with stones till they bleed.[2]

Laceration of the body in mourning among the Snake and Crow Indians.

To testify their grief for the death of a relative or friend the Snake Indians of the Rocky Mountains used to make incisions in all the fleshy parts of their bodies, and the greater their affection for the deceased, the deeper they cut into their own persons. They assured a French missionary that the pain which they felt in their minds escaped by these wounds.[3] The same missionary tells us how he met groups of Crow women in mourning, their bodies so covered and disfigured by clotted blood that they presented a spectacle as pitiable as it was horrible. For several years after a death the poor creatures were bound to renew the rites of mourning every time they passed near the graves of their relations; and so long as a single clot of blood remained on their persons, they were forbidden to wash themselves.[4]

Laceration of the body and cutting of the hair in mourning among the Comanches, Arapahos, Dacotas, and Kansas.

Among the Comanches, a famous tribe of horse Indians in Texas, a dead man's horses were generally killed and buried, that he might ride them to the Happy Hunting Grounds; and all the best of his property was burnt in order that it might be ready for his use on his arrival in the better land. His widows assembled round the dead horses, and with a knife in one hand and a whetstone in the other they uttered loud lamentations, while they cut gashes in their arms, legs, and bodies, till they were exhausted by the loss of blood.[5] In token of grief on such occasions the Comanches cut off the manes and tails of their horses, cropped their own hair, and lacerated their own bodies in various ways.[6] Among the Arapaho Indians women in mourning gash themselves lightly across the lower and upper arms and below the knees. Mourners in that tribe unbraid their hair and sometimes cut it off; the greater their love

[1] Stephen Powers, *Tribes of California* (Washington, 1877), p. 181.

[2] H. H. Bancroft, *The Native Races of the Pacific States*, i. 397, note 142.

[3] Le R. P. de Smet, *Voyages aux Montagnes Rocheuses* (Brussels and Paris, 1873), p. 28. As to the Snake Indians or Shoshones, see Alexander Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West* (London, 1855), i. 249 *sqq.*; F. W. Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico* (Washington, 1907–1910), ii. 556 *sqq.*

[4] Le R. P. de Smet, *op. cit.* p. 66.

[5] R. S. Neighbors, in H. R. Schoolcraft's *Indian Tribes of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1853–1856), ii. 133 *sq.*

[6] H. H. Bancroft, *The Native Races of the Pacific States*, i. 523.

for their departed friend, the more hair they cut off. The severed locks are buried with the corpse. Moreover, the tail and mane of the horse which bore the body to its last resting-place are severed and strewn over the grave.[1] After a bereavement the Sauks and Foxes, another tribe of Indians, "make incisions in their arms, legs, and other parts of the body; these are not made for the purposes of mortification, or to create a pain, which shall, by diverting their attention, efface the recollection of their loss, but entirely from a belief that their grief is internal, and that the only way of dispelling it is to give it a vent through which to escape."[2] The Dacotas or Sioux in like manner lacerated their arms, thighs, legs, breast, and so on, after the death of a friend; and the writer who reports the custom thinks it probable that they did so for the purpose of relieving their mental pain, for these same Indians, in order to cure a physical pain, used frequently to make incisions in their skin and suck up the blood, accompanying the operation with songs,[3] or rather incantations, which were no doubt supposed to assist the cure. Among the Kansas or Konzas, a branch of the Siouan stock who have given their name to a State of the American Union, a widow after the death of her husband used to scarify herself and rub her body with clay; she also became negligent of her dress, and in this melancholy state she continued for a year, after which the eldest surviving brother of her deceased husband took her to wife without ceremony.[4]

Laceration of the body and cutting of the hair in mourning among the Omahas.

The custom in regard to the mourning of widows was similar among the Omahas of Nebraska, another branch of the Siouan family. "On the death of the husband, the squaws exhibit the sincerity of their grief by giving away to their neighbours every thing they possess, excepting only a bare sufficiency of clothing to cover their persons with decency. They go out from the village, and build for themselves a small shelter of grass or

[1] Alfred L. Kroeber, "The Arapaho," *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History*, xviii. Part i. (New York, 1902) pp. 16 *sq.*

[2] William H. Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River* (London, 1825), i. 232.

[3] W. H. Keating, *op. cit.* i. 433.

[4] Edwin James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains* (London, 1823), i. 116. As to the Kansas Indians see F. W. Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico* (Washington, 1907–1910), i. 653 *sqq.*

bark; they mortify themselves by cutting off their hair, scarifying their skin, and, in their insulated hut, they lament incessantly. If the deceased has left a brother, he takes the widow to his lodge after a proper interval, and considers her as his wife, without any preparatory formality."[1] But among the Omahas it was not widows only who subjected themselves to these austerities in mourning. "The relatives bedaub their persons with white clay, scarify themselves with a flint, cut out pieces of their skin and flesh, pass arrows through their skin; and, if on a march, they walk barefoot at a distance from their people, in testimony of the sincerity of their mourning."[2] Among these Indians, "when a man or woman greatly respected died, the following ceremony sometimes took place. The young men in the prime of life met at a lodge near that of the deceased, and divested themselves of all clothing except the breechcloth; each person made two incisions in the upper left arm, and under the loop of flesh thus made thrust a small willow twig having on its end a spray of leaves. With the blood dripping on the leaves of the sprays that hung from their arms, the men moved in single file to the lodge where the dead lay. There, ranging themselves in a line shoulder to shoulder facing the tent, and marking the rhythm of the music with the willow sprigs they sang in unison the funeral song—the only one of its kind in the tribe. . . . At the close of the song a near relative of the dead advanced toward the singers and, raising a hand in the attitude of thanks, withdrew the willow twigs from their arms and threw them on the ground."[3] Further, as a token of grief at the death of a relative or friend, the Omahas used to cut off locks of their hair and throw them on the corpse.[4] Similarly among the Indians of Virginia the women in mourning would sometimes sever their tresses and throw them on the grave.[5]

Laceration of the body in mourning among the Patagonians and Fuegians.

Among the Indians of Patagonia, when a death took place, mourners used to pay visits of condolence to

[1] Edwin James, *op. cit.* i. 222 *sq.*

[2] Edwin James, *op. cit.* ii. 2.

[3] Alice C. Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, "The Omaha tribe," *Twenty-seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* (Washington, 1911), pp. 592-594.

[4] Alice C. Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, *op. cit.* p. 591.

[5] Lafitau, *Mœurs des Sauvages Ameriquains* (Paris, 1724), ii. 441.

the widow or other relations of the deceased, crying, howling, and singing in the most dismal manner, squeezing out tears, and pricking their arms and thighs with sharp thorns to make them bleed. For these demonstrations of woe they were paid with glass beads and other baubles.[1] As soon as the Fuegians learn of the death of a relative or friend, they break into vehement demonstrations of sorrow, weeping and groaning; they lacerate their faces with the sharp edges of shells and cut the hair short on the crowns of their heads.[2] Among the Onas, a Fuegian tribe, the custom of lacerating the face in mourning is confined to the widows or other female relations of the deceased.[3]

Laceration of the body in mourning among the Turks and other peoples.

The Turks of old used to cut their faces with knives in mourning for the dead, so that their blood and tears ran down their cheeks together.[4] Among the Orang Sakai, a primitive pagan tribe, who subsist by agriculture and hunting in the almost impenetrable forests of Eastern Sumatra, it is customary before a burial for the relations to cut their heads with knives and let the flowing blood drip on the face of the corpse.[5] Again, among the Roro-speaking tribes, who occupy a territory at the mouth of St. Joseph River in British New Guinea, when a death has taken place, the female relations of the deceased

[1] Thomas Falkner, *A Description of Patagonia* (Hereford, 1774), p. 118.

[2] *Mission Scientifique du Cap Horn*, vii. *Anthropologie, Ethnographie*, par P. Hyades, J. Deniker (Paris, 1891), p. 379.

[3] John M. Cooper, *Analytical and Critical Bibliography of the Tribes of Tierra del Fuego and adjacent territory* (Washington, 1917), p. 160 (*Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 63*).

[4] Stanislas Julien, *Documents Historiques sur les Tou-Kioue (Turcs), traduits du Chinois* (Paris, 1877), pp. 10, 28; Léon Cahun, *Introduction à l'Histoire de l'Asie, Turcs et Mongols* (Paris, 1896), p. 59.

[5] J. A. van Rijn van Alkemarde, "Het rijk Gassip," *Tijdschrift van het Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, Tweede Serie, Deel ii. Afdeeling: Meer uitgebreide artikelen (Amsterdam and Utrecht, 1885), Tweede Stuk, pp. 238 *sq.*; H. A. Hijmans van Androoij, "Nota omtrent het rijk van Siak," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-Land-en Volkenkunde*, xxx. (1885) pp. 347-349. According to the latter writer, the Orang Sakai of Sumatra belong to the same stock as the Sakai of the Malay Peninsula. They speak a dialect of Malay interlarded with words of their own, except when they go out to search for camphor in the forests; for on such expeditions, like other tribes of the Indian Archipelago, they employ a special language or jargon. As to this camphor-speech, as it is called, see *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, pp. 405 *sqq.* (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part ii.). The name Orang means simply "men." See W. W. Skeat and C. O. Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (London, 1906), i. 19 *sq.*

cut their skulls, faces, breasts, bellies, arms, and legs with sharp shells, till they stream with blood and fall down exhausted.[1] In the Koiari and Toaripi tribes of British New Guinea mourners cut themselves with shells or flints till the blood flows freely.[2] So in Vate or Efate, an island of the New Hebrides, a death was the occasion of great wailing, and the mourners scratched their faces till they streamed with blood.[3] Similarly in Malekula, another island of the New Hebrides, gashes are or were cut in the bodies of mourners.[4]

Hair offered to the dead by mourners among the Galelareeze

The Galelareeze of Halmahera, an island to the west of New Guinea, make an offering of their hair to the soul of a deceased relative on the third day after his or her death, which is the day after burial. A woman, who has not recently suffered any bereavement in her own family, operates on the mourners, snipping off merely the tips of their eyebrows and of the locks which overhang their temples. After being thus shorn, they go and bathe in the sea and wash their hair with grated coco-nuts in order to purify themselves from the taint of death; for to touch or go near a corpse is thought to render a person unclean. A seer, for example, is supposed to lose his power of seeing spirits if he incurs this pollution or so much as eats food which has been in a house with a dead body. Should the survivors fail to offer their hair to the deceased and to cleanse themselves afterwards, it is believed that they do not get rid of the soul of their departed brother or sister. For instance, if some one has died away from home, and his family has had no news of his death, so that they have not shorn their hair nor bathed on the third day, the ghost (*soso*) of the dead

[1] Le P. Victor Jouet, *La Société des Missionnaires du Sacré-Cœur dans les Vicariats Apostoliques de la Mélanésie et de la Micronésie* (Issoudun, 1887), p. 292; Father Guis, "Les Canaques. Mort-deuil," *Les Missions Catholiques*, xxxiv. (Lyons, 1902) p. 186. As to the territory of these tribes, see C. G. Seligmann, *The Melanesians of British New Guinea* (Cambridge, 1910), p. 195.

[2] Rev. James Chalmers, "New Guinea; Toaripi and Koiari Tribes," *Report of the Second Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Melbourne, Victoria, in January 1890* (Sydney), pp. 316, 322.

[3] George Turner, *Samoa a Hundred Years Ago* (London, 1884), p. 335.

[4] Rev. T. Watt Leggatt, "Malekula, New Hebrides," *Report of the Fourth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Hobart, Tasmania, in January, 1892* (Sydney), p. 700.

man will haunt them and hinder them in all their work. When they crush coco-nuts, they will get no oil: when they pound sago, they will obtain no meal: when they are hunting, they will see no game. Not until they have learned of the death, and shorn their hair, and bathed, will the ghost cease thus to thwart and baffle them in their undertakings. The well-informed Dutch missionary who reports these customs believes that the offering of hair is intended to delude the simple ghost into imagining that his friends have followed him to the far country; but we may doubt whether even the elastic credulity of ghosts could be stretched so far as to mistake a few snippets of hair for the persons from whose heads they had been severed.[1]

Laceration of the body in mourning among the Polynesians. The custom as observed in Tahiti.

Customs of the same sort appear to have been observed by all the widely spread branches of the Polynesian race in the Pacific. Thus in Otaheite, when a death occurred, the corpse used to be conveyed to a house or hut, called *tupapow*, built specially for the purpose, where it was left to putrefy till the flesh had wholly wasted from the bones. "As soon as the body is deposited in the *tupapow*, the mourning is renewed. The women assemble, and are led to the door by the nearest relation, who strikes a shark's tooth several times into the crown of her head: the blood copiously follows, and is carefully received upon pieces of linen, which are thrown into the bier. The rest of the women follow this example, and the ceremony is repeated at the interval of two or three days, as long as the zeal and sorrow of the parties hold out. The tears also which are shed upon these occasions, are received upon pieces of cloth, and offered as oblations to the dead; some of the younger people cut off their hair, and that is thrown under the bier with the other offerings. This custom is founded upon a notion that the soul of the deceased, which they believe to exist in a separate state, is hovering about the place where the body is deposited: that it observes the actions of the survivors, and is gratified by such testimonies of their affection and grief."[2] According to a later writer the Tahitians in mourn-

Blood of mourners deposited on the bier.

Tears and hair of mourners offered to the dead.

[1] M. J. van Baarda, "Een apologie voor de dooden," *Bijdragen tot de Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indie*, lxix. (The Hague, 1913) pp. 64 *sq.*

[2] *The Voyages of Captain James Cook round the World* (London, 1809), i. 218 *sq.*

ing: "not only wailed in the loudest and most affecting tone, but tore their hair, rent their garments, and cut themselves with shark's teeth or knives in a shocking manner. The instrument usually employed was a small cane, about four inches long, with five or six shark's teeth fixed in, on opposite sides. With one of these instruments every female provided herself after marriage, and on occasions of death it was unsparingly used. With some this was not sufficient; they prepared a short instrument, something like a plumber's mallet, about five or six inches long, rounded at one end for a handle, and armed with two or three rows of shark's teeth fixed in the wood, at the other. With this, on the death of a relative or a friend, they cut themselves unmercifully, striking the head, temples, cheek, and breast, till the blood flowed profusely from the wounds. At the same time they uttered the most deafening and agonizing cries; and the distortion of their countenances, their torn and dishevelled hair, the mingled tears and blood that covered their bodies, their wild gestures and unruly conduct, often gave them a frightful and almost inhuman appearance, This cruelty was principally performed by the females, but not by them only; the men committed on these occasions the same enormities, and not only cut themselves, but came armed with clubs and other deadly weapons." At these doleful ceremonies the women sometimes wore short aprons, which they held up with one hand to receive the blood, while they cut themselves with the other. The blood-drenched apron was afterwards dried in the sun and given in token of affection to the bereaved family, who preserved it as a proof of the high esteem in which the departed had been held. On the death of a king or principal chief, his subjects assembled, tore their hair, lacerated their bodies till they were covered with blood, and often fought with clubs and stones till one or more of them were killed.[1] Such fights at the death of a great man may help us to understand how the custom of gladiatorial combats arose at Rome; for the ancients themselves inform us that these combats first took place at funerals and were a sub-

[1] William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, Second Edition (London, 1832–1836), i. 407-410. Compare J. A. Moerenhout, *Voyages aux Iles du Grand Ocean* (Paris, 1837), i. 544, 546 *sq.*

stitute for the slaughter of captives at the tomb.[1] At Rome the first exhibition of gladiators was given by D. Junius Brutus in 264 B.C. in honour of his dead father.[2]

Laceration of the body on other occasions in Tahiti.

Among the women of Otaheite the use of shark's teeth as a lancet to draw blood from their heads was not limited to occasions of death. If any accident befell a woman's husband, his relations or friends, or her own child, she went to work on herself with the shark's teeth; even if the child had only fallen down and hurt itself, the mother mingled her blood with its tears. But when a child died, the whole house was filled with kinsfolk, cutting their heads and making loud lamentations. "On this occasion, in addition to other tokens of grief, the parents cut their hair short on one part of their heads, leaving the rest long. Sometimes this is confined to a square patch on the forehead; at others they leave that, and cut off all the rest: sometimes a bunch is left over both ears, sometimes over one only; and sometimes one half is clipped quite close, and the other left to grow long: and these tokens of mourning are sometimes prolonged for two or three years."[3] This description may illustrate the Israelitish practice of making bald places on the head in sign of mourning.

Hair of mourners shorn in Tahiti.

Laceration of the body in mourning in Hawaii.

In Hawaii or the Sandwich Islands, when a king or great chief died, the people expressed their grief "by the most shocking personal outrages, not only by tearing off their clothes entirely, but by knocking out their eyes and teeth with clubs and stones, and pulling out their hair, and by burning and cutting their flesh."[4] Of these various mutilations that of knocking out teeth would seem to have been on these occasions the most prevalent and popular. It was practised by both sexes, though perhaps most extensively by men. On the death of a king or important chief the lesser chiefs connected with him by ties of blood or friendship were expected to display their attachment by knocking out one of their front teeth with a stone; and when they had done so, their followers felt bound to follow their example. Sometimes a man

Teeth of mourners knocked out.

[1] Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, 12; Servius, on Virgil, *Aen.* x. 519.

[2] Livy, *Epitoma*, xvi.; Valerius Maximus ii. 4. 7.

[3] Captain James Wilson, *Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean* (London, 1799), pp. 352 *sq.*

[4] C. S. Stewart, *Journal of a Residence in the Sandwich Islands* (London, 1828), p. 216.

broke out his own tooth; more frequently, however, the friendly office was discharged for him by another, who, planting one end of a stick against the tooth, hammered the other end with a stone, till the tooth was either knocked out or broken off. If the men shrank from submitting to this operation, the women would often perform it on them while they slept. More than one tooth was seldom extracted at one time; but the mutilation being repeated on the death of every chief of rank or authority, few adult men were to be seen with an entire set of teeth, and many had lost the front teeth on both the upper and lower jaw, which, apart from other inconveniences, caused a great defect in their speech. Some, however, dared to be singular and to retain most of their teeth.[1]

Laceration of the body in mourning in Tonga.

Similarly the Tongans in mourning beat their teeth with stones, burned circles and scars on their flesh, struck shark's teeth into their heads until the blood flowed in streams, and thrust spears into the inner parts of their thighs, into their sides below the arm-pits, and through their cheeks into their mouths.[2] When the cast-away English seaman, William Mariner, resided among the Tongans early in the nineteenth century, he witnessed and has graphically described the extravagant mourning for Finow, king of Tonga. The assembled chiefs and nobles on that occasion, he tells us, evinced their grief by cutting and wounding themselves with clubs, stones, knives, or sharp shells; one at a time, or two or three together, would run into the middle of the circle formed by the spectators to give these proofs of their extreme sorrow for the death, and their great respect for the memory, of their departed lord and friend. Thus one would cry, "Finow! I know well your mind; you have departed to Bolotoo,[3] and left your people under suspicion that I, or some of those about you, were unfaithful; but where is the proof of infidelity? where is a single instance of disrespect?" So saying, he would inflict violent blows and deep cuts on his head with a club, stone, or knife, exclaiming at intervals, "Is this not a proof

The mourning for Finow, King of Tonga.

[1] William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, Second Edition (London, 1832–1836), iv. 176. Compare U. Lisiansky, *A Voyage round the World* (London, 1814), p. 123.

[2] *The Voyages of Captain James Cook* (London, 1809), v. 420.

[3] The land of the dead.

of my fidelity? does this not evince loyalty and attachment to the memory of the departed warrior?" Another, after parading up and down with a wild and agitated step, spinning and whirling a club, would strike himself with the edge of it two or three times violently on the top or back of the head; then stopping suddenly and gazing steadfastly at the blood-bespattered implement, he would cry, "Alas! my club, who could have said that you would have done this kind office for me, and have enabled me thus to evince a testimony of my respect for Finow! Never, no, never, can you again tear open the brains of his enemies! Alas! what a great and mighty warrior has fallen! Oh! Finow, cease to suspect my loyalty; be convinced of my fidelity!" Some, more violent than others, cut their heads to the skull with such strong and frequent blows that they reeled and lost for a time the use of their reason.[1] Other men during the mourning for Finow shaved their heads and burned their cheeks with lighted rolls of cloth, and rubbing the wounds with astringent berries caused them to bleed. This blood they smeared about the wounds in circles of nearly two inches in diameter, giving themselves a very unseemly appearance; and they repeated the friction with the berries daily, making the blood to flow afresh. To show their love for their deceased master, the king's fishermen beat and bruised their heads with the paddles of their canoes. Moreover, each of them had three arrows stuck through each cheek in a slanting direction, so that, while the points were within the mouth, the heads of the arrows projected over the shoulders and were kept in that position by another arrow tied to both sets of heads at the fisherman's back, so as to form a triangle. With this strange accoutrement the fishermen walked round the grave, beating their faces and heads with their paddles, or pinching up the skin of the breast and sticking a spear quite through it, all to prove their affection for the deceased chief.[2]

Laceration of the body in mourning in Samoa, Mangaia, and the Marquesas Islands.

In the Samoan islands it was in like manner customary for mourners to manifest their grief by frantic lamentation

[1] William Mariner, *An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands*, Second Edition (London, 1818), i. 381-384.

[2] William Mariner, *op. cit.* i. 392 *sq.*, 404 *sq.*

and wailing, by rending the garments, tearing out the hair, burning their flesh with firebrands, bruising their bodies with stones, and gashing themselves with sharp stones, shells, and shark's teeth, till they were covered with blood. This was called an "offering of blood" (*taulanga toto*); but according to Dr. George Brown, the expression did not imply that the blood was presented to the gods, it signified no more than affection for the deceased and sorrow for his loss.[1] Similarly in Mangaia, one of the Hervey Islands, no sooner did a sick person expire than the near relatives blackened their faces, cut off their hair, and slashed their bodies with shark's teeth so that the blood streamed down. At Raratonga it was usual to knock out some of the front teeth in token of sorrow.[2] So, too, in the Marquesas Islands, "on the death of a great chief, his widow and the women of the tribe uttered piercing shrieks, whilst they slashed their foreheads, cheeks, and breasts with splinters of bamboo. This custom has disappeared, at least in Nuka-Hiva; but in the south-eastern group the women still comply with this usage, and, with faces bleeding from deep wounds, abandon themselves to demonstrations of despair at the funeral of their relations."[3]

Laceration of the body and cutting of the hair in mourning among the Maoris.

Among the Maoris of New Zealand the mourning customs were similar. "The wives and near relations, especially the female ones, testified their grief by cutting the face and forehead with shells or pieces of obsidian, until the blood flowed plentifully, suffering the streamlets to dry on the face, and the more perfectly it was covered with clotted gore the greater the proof of their respect for the dead; the hair was always cut as a sign of

[1] Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, New Edition (Philadelphia, 1851), ii. 139; George Turner, *Samoa a Hundred Years Ago* (London, 1884), p. 144; Rev. John B. Stair, *Old Samoa* (London, 1897), p. 182; George Brown, D.D., *Melanesians and Polynesians* (London, 1910), pp. 401 *sq.*; Rev. S. Ella, "Samoa," *Report of the Fourth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Hobart, Tasmania, in January 1892* (Sydney), p. 640.

[2] Rev. W. Wyatt Gill, "Mangaia (Hervey Islands)," *Report of the Second Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Melbourne, Victoria, in January 1890* (Sydney), p. 344.

[3] Clavel, *Les Marquisiens* (Paris, 1885), p. 39; compare *id.*, p. 44. Compare Max Radiguet, *Les derniers Sauvages* (Paris, 1882), p. 284; Vincendon-Dumoulin et C. Desgraz, *Iles Marquises ou Nouka-hiva* (Paris, 1843), p. 250.

grief, the men generally cut it only on one side, from the forehead to the neck."[1] According to another account, the cuttings for the dead among the Maoris were by no means confined to the face and forehead. "All the immediate relatives and friends of the deceased, with the slaves, or other servants or dependants, if he possessed any, cut themselves most grievously, and present a frightful picture to a European eye. A piece of flint (made sacred on account of the blood which it has shed, and the purpose for which it has been used) is held between the third finger and the thumb; the depth to which it is to enter the skin appearing beyond the nails. The operation commences in the middle of the forehead; and the cut extends, in a curve, all down the face, on either side: the legs, arms, and chest are then most miserably scratched; and the breasts of the women, who cut themselves more extensively and deeper than the men, are sometimes wofully gashed."[2]

Laceration of the body in mourning among the aborigines of Australia.

Laceration of the body in mourning among the tribes of Victoria.

Nowhere, perhaps, has this custom of cutting the bodies of the living in honour of the dead been practised more systematically or with greater severity than among the rude aborigines of Australia, who stand at the foot of the social ladder. Thus among the tribes of Western Victoria a widower mourned his wife for three moons. Every second night he wailed and recounted her good qualities, and lacerated his forehead with his nails till the blood flowed down his cheeks; also he covered his head and face with white clay. If he loved her very dearly and wished to express his grief at her loss, he would burn himself across the waist in three lines with a red-hot piece of bark. A widow mourned for her husband for twelve moons. She cut her hair quite close, and burned her thighs with hot ashes pressed down on them with a piece of bark till she

[1] Rev. Richard Taylor, *Te Ika A Maui, or, New Zealand and its Inhabitants*, Second Edition (London, 1870), p. 217.

[2] Rev. William Yate, *An Account of New Zealand* (London, 1835), pp. 136 *sq.* On these cuttings among the Maoris, see also Ernest Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand* (London, 1843), ii. 62 (the nearest relations "make deep incisions in their own bodies with broken pieces of shells"); William Brown, *New Zealand and its Aborigines* (London, 1845), p. 19; Arthur S. Thomson, *The Story of New Zealand* (London, 1859), i. 186; Edward Tregear, "The Maoris of New Zealand," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xix. (1890) pp. 104 *sq.*

screamed with agony. Every second night she wailed and recounted his good qualities, and lacerated her forehead till the blood flowed down her cheeks. At the same time she covered her head and face with white clay. This she must do for three moons on pain of death. Children in mourning for their parents lacerated their brows.[1] Among the natives of Central Victoria the parents of the deceased were wont to lacerate themselves fearfully, the father beating and cutting his head with a tomahawk, and the mother burning her breasts and belly with a firestick. This they did daily for hours until the period of mourning was over.[2] Widows in these tribes not only burned their breasts, arms, legs, and thighs with firesticks, but rubbed ashes into their wounds and scratched their faces till the blood mingled with the ashes.[3] Among the Kurnai of South-Eastern Victoria mourners cut and gashed themselves with sharp stones and tomahawks until their heads and bodies streamed with blood.[4] In the Mukjarawaint tribe of Western Victoria, when a man died, his relatives cried over him and cut themselves with tomahawks and other sharp instruments for a week.[5]

Laceration of the body in mourning among the tribes of New South Wales.

Among the tribes of the Lower Murray and Lower Darling rivers mourners scored their backs and arms, sometimes even their faces, with red-hot brands, which raised hideous ulcers; afterwards they flung themselves prone on the grave, tore out their hair by handfuls, rubbed earth over their heads and bodies in great profusion, and ripped up their green ulcers till the mingled blood and grime presented a ghastly spectacle.[6] Among the Kamilaroi, a large tribe of Eastern New South Wales, the mourners, especially the women, used to plaster their heads and faces with white clay, and then cut gashes in their heads with axes, so that the blood flowed down over the clay to

[1] James Dawson, *Australian Aborigines* (Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide, 1881), p. 66.

[2] W. Stanbridge, "On the Aborigines of Victoria," *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, New Series i. (1861) p. 298.

[3] R. Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria* (Melbourne and London, 1878), i. 105.

[4] A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* (London, 1904), p. 459.

[5] A. W. Howitt, *op. cit.* p. 453.

[6] Peter Beveridge, "Of the Aborigines inhabiting the Great Lacustrine and Riverine Depression of the Lower Murray, Lower Murrumbidgee, Lower Lachlan, and Lower Darling," *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales for 1883* (Sydney, 1884), pp. 28, 29.

their shoulders, where it was allowed to dry.[1] Speaking of a native burial on the Murray River, a writer says that "around the bier were many women, relations of the deceased, wailing and lamenting bitterly, and lacerating their thighs, backs, and breasts with shells or flint, until the blood flowed copiously from the gashes."[2]

Laceration of the body in mourning among the tribes of Queensland and the Northern Territory.

In the Kabi and Wakka tribes of South-Eastern Queensland, about the Mary River, mourning lasted approximately six weeks. "Every night a general, loud wailing was sustained for hours, and was accompanied by personal laceration with sharp flints or other cutting instruments. The men would be content with a few incisions on the back of the head, but the women would gash themselves from head to foot and allow the blood to dry upon the skin."[3] In the Boulia district of Central Queensland women in mourning score their thighs, both inside and outside, with sharp stones or bits of glass, so as to make a series of parallel cuts; in neighbouring districts of Queensland the men make a single large and much deeper cruciform cut in the corresponding part of the thigh.[4] Members of the Kakadu tribe, in the Northern Territory of Australia, cut their heads in mourning till the blood flows down their faces on to their bodies. This is done by men and women alike. Some of the blood is afterwards collected in a piece of bark and apparently deposited in a tree close to the spot where the person died.[5]

In the Kariera tribe of Western Australia, when a death

[1] Rev. William Ridley, *Kamilaroi and other Australian Languages* (Sydney, 1875), p. 160; A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, p. 467.

[2] E. J. Eyre, *Journals of Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia* (London, 1845), ii. 347.

[3] John Mathew, *Two Representative Tribes of Queensland* (London, 1910), p. 115. Elsewhere (p. 107) the writer observes, "The women incised the front of the head for grief, the men the back of the head." But he says also that after a night of mourning he has seen the bodies of the women "marked with small incisions from top to toe, with the dry blood still about them." Compare *id.*, in E. M. Curr, *The Australian Race* (Melbourne and London, 1886–1887), iii. 165; A. McDonald, "Mode of Preparing the Dead among the Natives of the Upper Mary River, Queensland," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, i. (1872) pp. 216, 219.

[4] Walter E. Roth, *Studies Among the North-West-Central Queensland Aborigines* (Brisbane and London, 1897), p. 164. The natives of the Cloncurry district of Queensland, both men and women, also cut their thighs in sign of mourning. See W. E. Roth, *op. cit.* p. 165.

[5] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia* (London, 1914), pp. 241 *sq.* The writer's account of the use made of the collected blood is not quite clear.

Laceration of the body and cutting of the hair in mourning among the tribes of Western and Southern Australia.

has occurred, the relations, both male and female, wail and cut their scalps until the blood trickles from their heads. The hair of the deceased is cut off and preserved, being worn by the relatives in the form of string.[1] Among the Narrinyeri, a tribe of South Australia, the bodies of the dead used to be partially dried over a slow fire, then skinned, reddened with ochre, and set up naked on stages. "A great lamentation and wailing is made at this time by all the relations and friends of the dead man. They cut their hair off close to the head, and besmear themselves with oil and pounded charcoal. The women besmear themselves with the most disgusting filth; they all beat and cut themselves, and make violent demonstrations of grief. All the relatives are careful to be present and not to be wanting in the proper signs of sorrow, lest they should be suspected of complicity in causing the death. A slow fire is placed under the corpse, in order to dry it. The relations live, eat, drink, and sleep under the putrefying mass until it is dried. It is then wrapped up in mats and kept in the wurley. During the time in which it is drying the female relatives relieve one another in weeping before the body, so as to keep some women always weeping in front of it. All this has very much the appearance of idolatry. The smoke rising around the red sitting figure, the wailing women, the old men with long wands, with a brush of feathers at the end, anointing it with grease and red ochre—all these contribute to give one this impression of the whole scene."[2]

Laceration of the body and cutting of the hair in mourning in the Arunta and Warramunga tribes of Central Australia.

In the Arunta tribe of Central Australia a man is bound to cut himself on the shoulder in mourning for his father-in-law; if he does not do so, his wife may be given away to another man in order to appease the wrath of the ghost at his undutiful son-in-law. Arunta men regularly bear on their shoulders the raised scars which show that they have done their duty by their dead fathers-in-law.[3] The female relations

[1] A. R. Brown, "Three Tribes of Western Australia," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) p. 169. Compare E. Clement, "Ethnographical Notes on the Western Australian Aborigines," *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, xvi. (1904) pp. 8 *sq.* According to the latter writer, the hair of the dead person is made into necklaces, which are worn by the relatives for a year and then discarded.

[2] Rev. George Taplin, "The Narrinyeri," in J. D. Woods, *The Native Tribes of South Australia* (Adelaide, 1879), p. 20. A wurley is a rude sort of native hut.

[3] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1899), p. 500.

of a dead man in the Arunta tribe also cut and hack themselves in token of sorrow, working themselves up into a sort of frenzy as they do so, yet in all their apparent excitement they take care never to wound a vital part, but vent their fury on their scalps, their shoulders, and their legs.[1] In the Warramunga tribe of Central Australia widows crop their hair short, and, after cutting open the middle line of the scalp, run firesticks along the wounds, often with serious consequences.[2] Other female relations of the deceased among the Warramunga content themselves with cutting their scalps open by repeated blows of yam-sticks till the blood streams down over their faces; while men gash their thighs more or less deeply with knives. These wounds on the thigh are made to gape as widely as possible by tying string tightly round the leg on both sides of the gash. The scars so made are permanent. A man has been seen with traces of no less than twenty-three such wounds inflicted at different times in mourning. In addition, some Warramunga men in mourning cut off their hair closely, burn it, and smear their scalps with pipeclay, while other men cut off their whiskers. All these things are regulated by very definite rules. The gashing of the thighs, and even the cutting of the hair and of the whiskers, are not left to chance or to the caprice of the mourners; the persons who perform these operations on themselves must be related to the deceased in certain definite ways and in no other; and the relationships are of that classificatory or group order which is alone recognized by the Australian aborigines.[3] In this tribe, "if a man, who stands in a particular relationship to you, happens to die, you must do the proper thing, which may be either gashing your thigh or cutting your hair, quite regardless of whether you were personally acquainted with the dead man, or whether he was your dearest friend or greatest enemy."[4]

It deserves to be noticed that in these cuttings for the

[1] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 510.

[2] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 500, note [1].

[3] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1904), pp. 516-523; *iid.*, *Across Australia* (London, 1912), ii. 426-430. As to the classificatory or group system of relationship, see above, vol. ii. pp. 227 *sqq.*

[4] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *Across Australia* (London, 1912), ii. 429.

Application of the blood of mourners to the corpse or to the grave.

dead among the Australians the blood drawn from the bodies of the mourners is sometimes applied directly to the corpse, or at least allowed to drop into the grave. Thus among some tribes on the Darling River several men used to stand by the open grave and cut each other's heads with a boomerang; then they held their bleeding heads over the grave, so that the blood dripped on the corpse lying in it. If the deceased was held in high esteem, the bleeding was repeated after some earth had been thrown on the corpse.[1] Similarly in the Milya-uppa tribe, which occupied the country about the Torrowotta Lake in the north-west of New South Wales, when the dead man had been a warrior, the mourners cut each other's heads and let the blood fall on the corpse as it lay in the grave.[2] Again, in the Bahkunjy tribe at Bourke, on the Darling River, "I was present at a burial, when the widower (as the chief mourner chanced to be) leapt into the grave, and, holding his hair apart with the fingers of both hands, received from another black, who had leapt after him, a smart blow with a boomerang on the 'parting.' A strong jet of blood followed. The widower then performed the same duty by his comrade. This transaction took place, I fancy, on the bed of leaves, before the corpse had been deposited."[3] Among the Arunta of Central Australia the female relations of the dead used to throw themselves on the grave and there cut their own and each other's heads with fighting-clubs or digging-sticks till the blood, streaming down over the pipe-clay with which their bodies were whitened, dripped upon the grave.[4] Again, at a burial on the Vasse River, in Western Australia, a writer describes how, when the grave was dug, the natives placed the corpse beside it, then "gashed their thighs, and at the flowing of the blood they all said, 'I have brought blood,' and they stamped the foot forcibly on the ground, sprinkling the blood around them; then wiping the wounds with a wisp of leaves, they threw it, bloody as it was, on the dead man."[5]

[1] F. Bonney, "On Some Customs of the River Darling, New South Wales," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xiii. (1884) pp. 134 *sq.*

[2] James A. Reid, in E. M. Curr, *The Australian Race* (Melbourne and London, 1886–1887), ii. 179.

[3] Greville N. Teulon, in E. M. Curr, *The Australian Race*, ii. 203 *sq.*

[4] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 507, 509 *sq.*

[5] (Sir) George Grey, *Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-*

Application of the severed hair of mourners to the corpse.

Further, it is deserving of notice that the Australian aborigines sometimes apply their severed hair, as well as their spilt blood, to the bodies of their dead friends. Thus, Sir George Grey tells us that "the natives of many parts of Australia, when at a funeral, cut off portions of their beards, and singeing these, throw them upon the dead body; in some instances they cut off the beard of the corpse, and burning it, rub themselves and the body with the singed portions of it."[1] Comparing the modern Australian with the ancient Hebrew usages in mourning, Sir George Grey adds, "The native females invariably cut themselves and scratch their faces in mourning for the dead; they also literally make a baldness between their eyes, this being always one of the places where they tear the skin with the finger nails."[2]

Laceration of the body and cutting of the hair in mourning among the aborigines of Tasmania.

Among the rude aborigines of Tasmania the mourning customs appear to have been similar. "Plastering their shaven heads with pipe-clay, and covering their faces with a mixture of charcoal and emu fat, or mutton-bird grease, the women not only wept, but lacerated their bodies with sharp shells and stones, even burning their thighs with a firestick. Flowers would be thrown on the grave, and trees entwined to cover their beloved ones. The hair cut off in grief was thrown upon the mound."[3]

Can the cutting of the body and the shearing of the hair be intended to disguise the mourner from the ghost?

The customs of cutting the body and shearing the hair in token of mourning for the dead have now been traced throughout a considerable portion of mankind, from the most highly civilized nations of antiquity down to the lowest savages of modern times. It remains to ask, What is

West and Western Australia (London, 1841), ii. 332, quoting a letter of a Mr. Bussel.

[1] (Sir) George Grey, *op. cit.* ii. 335.

[2] (Sir) George Grey, *op. cit.* ii. 335. For other evidence of cuttings for the dead among the Australian aborigines, see Major (Sir) T. L. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia*, Second Edition (London, 1839), ii. 346; John Fraser, "The Aborigines of New South Wales," *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, xvi. (1882) pp. 229, 231; Edward Palmer, "Notes on some Australian Tribes," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xiii. (1884) p. 298; John F. Mann, "Notes on the Aborigines of Australia," *Proceedings of the Geographical Society of Australasia*, i. (Sydney, 1885) p. 47; E. M. Curr, *The Australian Race*, i. 330, ii. 249, 346, 443, 465, iii. 21, 29. The custom was apparently universal among these savages.

[3] James Bonwick, *Daily Life and Origin of the Tasmanians* (London, 1870), pp. 97 *sq.*

the meaning of these practices? In the preceding chapter we saw that the Nicobarese shave their hair and eyebrows in mourning for the alleged purpose of disguising themselves from the ghost, whose unwelcome attentions they desire to avoid, and whom they apparently imagine to be incapable of recognizing them with their hair cut.[1] Can it be, then, that both customs have been adopted in order either to deceive or to repel the ghost by rendering his surviving relations either unrecognizable or repulsive in his eyes? On this theory both customs are based on a fear of the ghost; by cutting their flesh and cropping their hair the mourners hope that the ghost will either not know them, or that knowing them he will turn away in disgust from their cropped heads and bleeding bodies, so that in either case he will not molest them.

The fear of the ghost as shown in Australian mourning customs.

How does this hypothesis square with the facts which we have passed in review? The fear of the ghost certainly counts for something in the Australian ceremonies of mourning; for we have seen that among the Arunta, if a man does not cut himself properly in mourning for his father-in-law, the old man's ghost is supposed to be so angry that the only way of appeasing his wrath is to take away his daughter from the arms of his undutiful son-in-law.[2] Further, in the Unmatjera and Kaitish tribes of Central Australia a widow covers her body with ashes and renews this token of grief during the whole period of mourning, because, if she failed to do so, "the *atnirinja*, or spirit of the dead man, who constantly follows her about, will kill her and strip all the flesh off her bones."[3] In these customs the fear of the ghost is manifest, but there is apparently no intention either to deceive or to disgust him by rendering the person of the mourner unrecognizable or repulsive. On the contrary, the Australian practices in mourning seem to aim rather at obtruding the mourners on the attention of the ghost, in order that he may be satisfied with their demonstrations of sorrow at the irreparable loss they have sustained through his death. The Arunta and other tribes

The desire to please and propitiate the ghost as shown in Australian mourning customs.

[1] Above, p. 236.
[2] Above, p. 294.
[3] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1904), p. 507.

of Central Australia fear that if they do not display a sufficient amount of grief, the spirit of the dead man will be offended and do them a mischief. And with regard to their practice of whitening the mourner's body with pipe-clay, we are told that "there is no idea of concealing from the spirit of the dead person the identity of the mourner; on the other hand, the idea is to render him or her more conspicuous, and so to allow the spirit to see that it is being properly mourned for."[1] In short, the Central Australian customs in mourning appear designed to please or propitiate the ghost rather than to elude his observation or excite his disgust. That this is the real intention of the Australian usages in general is strongly suggested by the practices of allowing the mourner's blood to drop on the corpse or into the grave, and depositing his severed locks on the lifeless body; for these acts can hardly be interpreted otherwise than as tribute paid or offerings presented to the spirit of the dead in order either to gratify his wishes or to avert his wrath. Similarly we saw that among the Orang Sakai of Sumatra mourners allow the blood dripping from their wounded heads to fall on the face of the corpse,[2] and that in Otaheite the blood flowing from the self-inflicted wounds of mourners used to be caught in pieces of cloth, which were then laid beside the dead body on the bier.[3] Further, the custom of depositing the shorn hair of mourners on the corpse or in the grave has been observed in ancient or modern times by Arabs, Greeks, Mingrelians, North American Indians, Tahitians, and Tasmanians, as well as by the aborigines of Australia.[4] Hence we seem to be justified in concluding that the desire to benefit or please the ghost has been at least one motive which has led many peoples to practise those corporeal mutilations with which we are here concerned. But to say this is not to affirm that the propitiation of the ghost has been the sole intention with which these austerities have been practised. Different peoples may well have inflicted these sufferings or disfigurements on themselves from different motives, and amongst these various

Offerings of blood and hair to the dead.

[1] (Sir) Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London, 1899), pp. 510, 511.

[2] Above, p. 233.

[3] Above, p. 285.

[4] Above, pp. 273, 274, 276, 280, 280 *sq.*, 282, 285, 297.

motives the wish to elude or deceive the dangerous spirit of the dead may sometimes have been one.

How is the offering of blood supposed to benefit the dead?

We have still to inquire how the offering of blood and hair is supposed to benefit or please the ghost? Is he thought to delight in them merely as expressions of the unfeigned sorrow which his friends feel at his death? That certainly would seem to have been the interpretation which the Tahitians put upon the custom; for along with their blood and hair they offered to the soul of the deceased their tears, and they believed that the ghost "observes the actions of the survivors, and is gratified by such testimonies of their affection and grief."[1] Yet even when we have made every allowance for the selfishness of the savage, we should probably do injustice to the primitive ghost if we supposed that he exacted a tribute of blood and tears and hair from no other motive than a ghoulish delight in the sufferings and privations of his surviving kinsfolk. It seems likely that originally he was believed to reap some more tangible and material benefit from these demonstrations of affection and devotion. An eminent scholar has suggested that the intention of offering the blood of the mourners to the spirit of the departed was to create a blood covenant between the living and the dead, and thus to confirm or establish friendly relations with the spiritual powers.[2] In support of this view he refers to the practice of some Australian tribes on the Darling River, who, besides wounding their heads and allowing the blood from the wounds to drop on the corpse, were wont to cut a piece of flesh from the dead body, dry it in the sun, cut it in small pieces, and distribute the pieces among the relatives and friends, some of whom sucked it to get strength and courage, while others threw it into the river to bring a flood and fish, when both were wanted.[3] Here the giving of blood to the dead and the sucking of his flesh undoubtedly appear to imply a relation of mutual benefit between the survivors and the deceased, whether that relation is to be described as a

Robertson Smith's theory of a blood covenant between the living and the dead.

[1] Above, p. 285.

[2] W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, New Edition (London, 1894), pp. 322 *sq.*

[3] F. Bonney, "On Some Customs of the Aborigines of the River Darling, New South Wales," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xiii. (1884) pp. 134 *sq.*

covenant or not. Similarly among the Kariera of Western Australia, who bleed themselves in mourning, the hair of the deceased is cut off and worn by the relatives in the form of string.[1] Here, again, there seems to be an exchange of benefits between the living and the dead, the survivors giving their blood to their departed kinsman and receiving his hair in return.

The evidence of such a covenant inadequate.

However, these indications of an interchange of good offices between the mourners and the mourned are too few and slight to warrant the conclusion that bodily mutilations and wounds inflicted on themselves by bereaved relatives are always or even generally intended to establish a covenant of mutual help and protection with the dead. The great majority of the practices which we have surveyed in this chapter can reasonably be interpreted as benefits supposed to be conferred by the living on the dead, but few or none of them, apart from the Australian practices which I have just cited, appear to imply any corresponding return of kindness made by the ghost to his surviving kinsfolk. Accordingly the hypothesis which would explain the cuttings for the dead as attempts to institute a blood covenant with them must apparently be set aside on the ground that it is not adequately supported by the evidence at our disposal.

The blood offered to the dead may be intended to feed and strengthen them.

A simpler and more obvious explanation of the cuttings is suggested by the customs of some of the savages who inflict such wounds on themselves. Thus we have seen that the practice of wounding the heads of mourners and letting the blood drip on the corpse was prevalent among the Australian tribes of the Darling River. Now among these same tribes it is, or rather used to be, the custom that on undergoing the ceremony of initiation into manhood "during the first two days the youth drinks only blood from the veins in the arms of his friends, who willingly supply the required food. Having bound a ligature round the upper part of the arm they cut a vein on the under side of the forearm, and run the blood into a wooden vessel, or a dish-shaped piece of bark. The youth, kneeling on his bed, made of the small branches of a fuchsia shrub, leans forward, while holding his hands behind him, and licks up the blood

[1] Above, pp. 293 *sq.*

from the vessel placed in front of him with his tongue, like a dog. Later he is allowed to eat the flesh of ducks as well as the blood."[1] Again, among these same tribes of the Darling River, "a very sick or weak person is fed upon blood which the male friends provide, taken from their bodies in the way already described. It is generally taken in a raw state by the invalid, who lifts it to his mouth like jelly between his fingers and thumb. I have seen it cooked in a wooden vessel by putting a few red-hot ashes among it."[2] Again, speaking of the same tribes, the same writer tells us that "it sometimes happens that a change of camp has to be made, and a long journey over a dry country undertaken, with a helpless invalid, who is carried by the strong men, who willingly bleed themselves until they are weak and faint, to provide the food they consider is the best for a sick person."[3] But if these savages gave their own blood to feed the weak and sickly among their living friends, why should they not have given it for the same purpose to their dead kinsfolk? Like almost all savages, the Australian aborigines believed that the human soul survives the death of the body; what more natural accordingly than that in its disembodied state the soul should be supplied by its loving relatives with the same sustaining nourishment with which they may have often strengthened it in life? On the same principle, when Ulysses was come to deadland in the far country of Cimmerian darkness, he sacrificed sheep and caused their blood to flow into a trench, and the weak ghosts, gathering eagerly about it, drank the blood and so acquired the strength to speak with him.[4]

The hair offered to the dead may also be intended to strengthen them, since it is a common notion that a person's strength is in his hair.

But if the blood offered by mourners was designed for the refreshment of the ghost, what are we to say of the parallel offering of their hair? The ghost may have been thought to drink the blood, but we can hardly suppose that

[1] F. Bonney, "On some Customs of the Aborigines of the River Darling, New South Wales," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xiii. (1884) p. 128.

[2] F. Bonney, *op. cit.* p. 132.

[3] F. Bonney, *op. cit.* p. 133.

[4] Homer, *Odyssey*, xi. 13 *sqq.* The drinking of the blood by the ghosts is explicitly mentioned in verses 98, 153, 232, 390. The view that the blood drawn from their bodies by mourners was originally intended to feed the dead man has the support of Herbert Spencer, who compared the Homeric description of the blood-drinking ghosts. See his *Principles of Sociology*, i. (London, 1904) pp. 265 *sqq.*

he was reduced to such extremities of hunger as to eat the hair. Still it is to be remembered that in the opinion of some peoples the hair is the special seat of its owner's strength,[1] and that accordingly in cutting their hair and presenting it to the dead they may have imagined that they were supplying him with a source of energy not less ample and certain than when they provided him with their blood to drink. If that were so, the parallelism which runs through the mourning customs of cutting the body and polling the hair would be intelligible. That this is the true explanation of both practices, however, the evidence at our command is hardly sufficient to enable us to pronounce with confidence.

The customs of cutting the body and shearing the hair in mourning are evidence of a worship of the dead.

So far as it goes, however, the preceding inquiry tends to confirm the view that the widespread practices of cutting the bodies and shearing the hair of the living after a death were originally designed to gratify or benefit in some way the spirit of the departed; and accordingly, wherever such customs have prevailed, they may be taken as evidence that the people who observed them believed in the survival of the human soul after death and desired to maintain friendly relations with it. In other words, the observance of these usages implies a propitiation or worship of the dead. Since the Hebrews appear to have long cut both their bodies and their hair in honour of their departed relations, we may safely include them among the many tribes and nations who have at one time or another been addicted to that worship of ancestors which, of all forms of primitive religion, has probably enjoyed the widest popularity and exerted the deepest influence on mankind. The intimate connexion of these mourning customs with the worship of the dead was probably well remembered in Israel down to the close of the monarchy, and may have furnished the religious reformers of that age with their principal motive for prohibiting extravagant displays of sorrow which they justly regarded as heathenish.

[1] For evidence, see above, vol. ii. pp. 484 *sqq.*

CHAPTER V

THE BITTER WATER

§ 1. *The Ordeal of the Bitter Water in Israel*

Hebrew law that a suspected adulteress is to be tested by obliging her to drink a bitter water, mixed with the dust of the sanctuary and with the ink with which curses have been written.

IN the Priestly Code it is ordained that when a man suspects his wife of infidelity and desires to put her to the proof, he shall bring her to the priest along with an oblation, consisting of the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal without the addition of oil or frankincense. This oblation is described as "a meal offering of jealousy, a meal offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance. And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the Lord: and the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water: and the priest shall set the woman before the Lord, and let the hair of the woman's head go loose, and put the meal offering of memorial in her hands, which is the meal offering of jealousy: and the priest shall have in his hand the water of bitterness that causeth the curse: and the priest shall cause her to swear, and shall say unto the woman, If no man have lien with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness, being under thy husband, be thou free from this water of bitterness that causeth the curse: but if thou hast gone aside, being under thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lien with thee besides thine husband: then the priest shall cause the woman to swear with the oath of cursing, and the priest shall say unto the woman, The Lord make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the Lord doth make thy thigh to fall away, and thy belly to swell; and this water that causeth the curse shall go into

thy bowels, and make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to fall away: and the woman shall say, Amen, Amen. And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out into the water of bitterness: and he shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that causeth the curse: and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her and become bitter. And the priest shall take the meal offering of jealousy out of the woman's hand, and shall wave the meal offering before the Lord, and bring it unto the altar: and the priest shall take an handful of the meal offering, as the memorial thereof, and burn it upon the altar, and afterward shall make the woman drink the water. And when he hath made her drink the water, then it shall come to pass, if she be defiled, and have committed a trespass against her husband, that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall fall away: and the woman shall be a curse among her people. And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed."[1]

The mode of procedure in the ordeal.

In this passage there appear to be certain repetitions which are most naturally explained on the hypothesis that the text has been either interpolated or compiled from two distinct but closely allied versions of the judicial procedure to be followed in such cases. Thus the priest is twice said to bring the woman before the Lord, and the woman is twice said to drink the water of bitterness, both before and after the meal offering has been presented to the Lord by the priest.[2] Disregarding these repetitions, we gather that in its main features the ordeal of the bitter water was administered as follows. The priest took holy water and mixed in it dust swept from the floor of the sanctuary. Then he set the woman before the Lord at the holy place, loosened her hair, and put the meal offering in her hands. While she held it, he, holding in his hand the holy water mixed with the dust of the sanctuary, recited the curse

[1] Numbers v. 11-28.

[2] On the question of the composition of the text, see B. Stade, "Die Eiferopferthora," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, xvi. (1895) pp. 166-178; J. Estlin Carpenter and G. Harford-Battersby, *The Hexateuch* (London, 1900), ii. 191 *sq.*; A. R. S. Kennedy, *Leviticus and Numbers*, p. 214 (*The Century Bible*); G. B. Gray, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers* (Edinburgh, 1903), p. 49.

which would befall her if, being unfaithful to her husband, she wrongfully swore to her innocence and drank the bitter water; the curse was that the water, entering into her bowels, should cause her belly to swell and her thigh to fall away. The woman listened to the curse, and solemnly assented to it by saying, "Amen, amen!" Next the priest wrote the curse on a slip of parchment,[1] and washed off the ink into the holy water. After that he took the meal offering from the woman's hand, waved it before the Lord, and burned a handful of it on the altar. Finally, he caused the woman to drink the holy water, which, impregnated with the dust of the sanctuary and the ink of the curse, had become a powerful instrument to execute the curse upon the guilty by causing the belly of the adulteress to swell and her thigh to fall away.

The Hebrew ordeal of the bitter water is probably very ancient and has its analogies elsewhere.

The passage is interesting as the only record of a trial by ordeal prescribed by Jewish law; and though the Priestly Code, in which it occurs, belongs to the period after the Exile,[2] we cannot doubt that the practice which it enjoins was no novelty, but that on the contrary it had been in vogue among the Israelites from time immemorial. For trial by ordeal, wherever it flourishes, is a mode of ascertaining guilt as barbarous as it is ineffectual; and though, by reason of the conservative nature of law and custom, it may long linger even among peoples who have attained to a considerable degree of civilization, it can only take its rise in ages of gross ignorance and credulity. The different forms of ordeal by which men have sought to elicit the truth are many and well fitted to illustrate the extent and variety of human folly.[3] To describe, or simply to enumerate them all, even if it were possible, would here be out of place; I shall confine myself to exemplifying a form of ordeal which bears some analogy to the Hebrew ordeal of the bitter water.

[1] The Hebrew word *sepher* (סֵפֶר), here translated "book" in our English Bible, denotes anything which can receive writing, for example a slip of parchment.

[2] See above, pp. 109 *sq.*

[3] For examples see (Sir) Edward B. Tylor in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Ninth Edition, xvii. (Edinburgh, 1884) *s.v.* "Ordeal," pp. 818-820; C. J. Leendertz, "Godsoordeelen en Eeden," *Tijdschrift van het Kon. Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, Tweede Serie, V. Afdeeling: Meer uitgebreide artikelen (Leyden, 1888), pp. 1-29, 315-338.

§ 2. *The Poison Ordeal in Africa*

The ordeal by drinking poison in Africa.

In many parts of Africa it has been, and perhaps still is, customary to submit criminal charges, particularly accusations of witchcraft, to the test of poison: the accused, and sometimes the accusers also, are compelled to swallow a poisoned draught, and according to the result a verdict of guilty or not guilty is returned. As a rule, a man is declared innocent if he vomits up the poison, but guilty if he either retains it or evacuates it by purging. Death from the effect of the poison is regarded as a sure sign of guilt, but often it is not awaited by the crowd of spectators, who, as soon as it appears that the supposed culprit cannot eject the poison in the approved fashion, rush on him and despatch him with every symptom of rage and every refinement of cruelty. This at least used to be the ordinary form of procedure under native law, before the intervention of civilized Europe laid African barbarism under some restraint. It is probably carried out to this day in holes and corners, where the blacks can practise their old customs without being observed and called to account by their white rulers. Although in what follows I shall often, following my authorities, speak of these judicial murders as if they still took place, we may probably assume that for the most part they are happily obsolete.[1]

Bark of the tree *Erythrophleum guineense* used in the poison ordeal.

The poisons employed in the ordeal vary in different parts of Africa, but the one which seems to have the widest range is procured from the bark of the tree known to European botanists as *Erythrophleum guineense*. It is a large tropical tree belonging to the order of the *Leguminosae*, the sub-order of the *Caesalpinioideae*, and the tribe of the *Dimorphandreae*. The trunk is tall and, like the larger branches, is covered with a rough, corrugated, and fissured bark of a ferruginous red colour, while the bark of the lesser branches is greyish and smooth. The wood is exceedingly hard; house-

[1] African ordeals in general, and the poison ordeal in particular, are illustrated with copious examples by the late German ethnologist A. H. Post in his useful work *Afrikanische Jurisprudenz* (Oldenburg and Leipsic, 1887), ii. 110 *sqq*. The subject is discussed from the medical and botanical side by Messrs. Ém. Perrot and Ém. Vogt in their work, *Poisons de Flèches et Poisons d'Épreuve* (Paris, 1913), pp. 35 *sqq*.

timbers made of it do not take fire in conflagrations which consume the rest of the building. It also resists damp and is never attacked by white ants. Hence the wood is much used on the Gambia, the Casamance, and the Upper Niger for the building of houses and the fashioning of household utensils.[1] Administered to birds, a small dose of the poison produces violent vomiting and irregular muscular movements, with difficult respiration, followed by loss of muscular power and death. In cats and dogs the symptoms are restlessness, nausea, succeeded by violent vomiting, spasmodic jerks of the limbs during locomotion, quickened respiration, staggering gait, and death during a convulsion, apparently connected with an attempt to vomit. Consciousness seems to be preserved to the last. The temperature of the body is not affected by the administration of the drug. Applied to the eye, the poison has no effect on the pupil, nor does it cause congestion of the conjunctiva or lachrymation.[2]

Geographical and racial diffusion of the poison ordeal in Africa.

The poison ordeal has been commonly employed both by the true negroes and by the Bantus, that is, by the two black races which between them occupy the greater part of tropical and southern Africa. It has been rampant from the Senegal River and the Niger on the north to the Zambesi on the south. On the other hand, it seems to be rarer among the Bantu tribes to the south of the Zambesi, and to be little known to the black race now commonly called Nilotic, which, as the name implies, is principally seated on the upper waters of the Nile, though it also numbers some important tribes in Eastern Africa.[3] In

[1] William Procter, jun., "On *Erythrophleum judiciale* (the sassy bark of Cape Palmas)," *Pharmaceutical Journal and Transactions*, xvi. (1856–1857) p. 234 (article reprinted from *The American Journal of Pharmacy*); Ém. Perrot et Ém. Vogt, *Poisons de Flèches et Poisons d'Épreuve* (Paris, 1913), pp. 36 *sq.* I have corrected Procter's account of the order, sub-order, and tribe of the tree by information kindly furnished to me by Dr. O. Stapf, of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. From him I learn that the original and correct spelling of the name is *Erythrophleum*, not *Erythrophlæum*, as it is commonly spelt, the second part being derived from φλέω, "to teem with," in reference to the sap, not to the bark, of the tree.

[2] Lauder Brunton and Walter Pye, "Physiological action of the bark of the *Erythrophleum guineense* (casca, cassa or Sassy Bark)," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London*, xxv. (1877) pp. 172-174.

[3] As to these outlying tribes of Nilotics (Masai, Nandi, Turkana, and Suk), see Sir Charles Eliot's Introduction to A. C. Hollis's *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), pp. xv. *sq.*

describing the ordeal as it is practised, with many variations of detail, by these various peoples, I shall choose examples which illustrate the geographical and racial distribution of the custom. How far the limits of its diffusion have been determined by the habitat of the trees and shrubs which furnish the various poisons employed in this parody of justice, is a question which for its investigation requires the assistance of botanical and medical science. On this subject I have consulted my learned friend, Sir David Prain, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, and from him and his assistant, Dr. O. Stapf, I have obtained valuable information, which I shall here summarize, so far as it bears on the prevalence of the poison ordeal.

Different species of *Erythrophleum* in Africa.

The tree which in Africa has earned a sombre notoriety through the innumerable deaths it has caused in the ordeal belongs to the genus *Erythrophleum*, of which eight species are known. Of these species three are found in Africa, namely *Erythrophleum guineense*, *Erythrophleum micranthum*, and *Erythrophleum pubistamineum*, and of the three the two former (*E. guineense* and *E. micranthum*) are definitely known to be extremely poisonous to man, the poison being the alkaloid erythrophleine. Both these deadly poisons have been employed by the natives of Africa in the ordeal. Of the two the *Erythrophleum guineense* appears to have the wider range, extending right across Africa from Senegal on the west coast to Mombasa on the east coast, and from there southward along the coast to the Zambesi. But curiously enough the tree seems to avoid the basin of the Congo; at all events there is no botanical record of the occurrence of any species of *Erythrophleum* in the vast area of the Belgian Congo, except in the divisions of Lower Congo and Boma near the mouth of the river.

Erythrophleum guineense.

Erythrophleum micranthum.

The other species of *Erythrophleum*, which is also used in the ordeal, namely *Erythrophleum micranthum*, has a much more limited range. It is a denizen of the low forest belt of the Guinea coast from about the Gold Coast to the Gaboon. In northern Lower Guinea, the two species, *E. guineense* and *E. micranthum*, are apparently mutually exclusive; that is, in the Gaboon we find *E. micranthum*, but no *E. guineense*. On the other hand, in Upper Guinea

the boundary between the two species is not so sharp; for while *E. micranthum* is confined to the coast belt, there is no doubt that *E. guineense* does sometimes come down very near to the sea. Yet on the whole it is approximately true to say that *E. guineense* is a tree of the higher and drier inland forests, *E. micranthum* is a tree of the moister forests near the coast.

Erythrophleum pubistamineum.

The third African species of *Erythrophleum*, namely *E. pubistamineum*, occurs on the western coast southward of the Congo, extending through Angola as far south as Amboland, which seems to be the extreme southern limit of the *Erythrophleum* in Africa. It is very remarkable that Welwitsch, who collected it in Angola, does not record its use in the ordeal nor even mention its poisonous properties. Indeed, we have no positive evidence that *E. pubistamineum* is poisonous, though on general grounds we may surmise that it is so. This species occurs also in the basins of the Chari and Bahr-el-Ghazal rivers, of which the former flows into Lake Chad and the latter into the White Nile; but the tree appears to be totally absent from the immense intermediate area of the Congo basin. In regard to this botanical lacuna, Sir David Prain tells me that "it is a well-known phenomenon that many individual species are to be met with both to the north and to the south of the vast territory drained by the Congo that have never yet been found in the Congo basin anywhere."

Erythrophleum couminga.

A fourth species of *Erythrophleum*, namely *Erythrophleum couminga*, occurs in Madagascar and the Seychelles. It is known to be extremely poisonous to man, the poison being, as in the three African species, the alkaloid erythrophleine.

Comparison of the geographical diffusion of *Erythrophleum* in Africa with the geographical diffusion of the poison ordeal in that continent.

If now we plot out on a map the area covered by the various species of *Erythrophleum* in Africa and Madagascar, we shall find that it forms a belt stretching right across the continent and occupying the greater part of the tropical regions, to the exclusion, however, of almost all the Nile valley, Abyssinia and Somaliland. To be more precise, the northern boundary of the tree runs from Senegal on the west to Mombasa on the east and thence eastward into the Seychelles; the southern boundary runs from Amboland

on the west through the basin of the Zambesi and the Shire Highlands to Madagascar, which it cuts through the middle a good deal nearer to the northern than to the southern extremity of the island.[1] Now if we compare the geographical area thus bounded, with the geographical area occupied by the poison ordeal, we shall find that the two nearly coincide; for while the ordeal prevails, roughly speaking, everywhere within these boundaries, it seems to be either rare or totally absent both to the north and to the south of them. Thus in respect of Southern Africa, where the *Erythrophleum* does not occur at all, the ordeal has rarely been reported from the eastern side of the continent and never, so far as I know, from the western side; indeed in regard to the principal tribe of South-Western Africa, namely the Herero, we are definitely informed by a good authority that the poison ordeal is unknown among them.[2] Similarly in the area outside the northern limit of the tree the poison ordeal appears to be nearly absent; in particular it is seemingly not practised by the Nilotic tribes of British East Africa, though it is in common use among their neighbours of the Bantu stock. The single reported exception to the rule in this part of Africa is furnished by the Gallas, who are said to employ the poison ordeal with fatal results, though the nature of the poison used for the purpose has not been ascertained.[3] In the valley of the Nile, except at its source, where the river issues from the Victoria Nyanza Lake, the poison ordeal appears to be unknown, and the same may be said of Abyssinia and of the tribes bordering on it. And among the most northerly of the Bantu tribes, at the sources of the Nile, namely the Basoga, the Baganda, and the Banyoro, all of whom practise or rather used to practise, the poison ordeal, the material for this judicial form of murder is furnished not by the *Erythrophleum* but by the datura plant. The most northerly tribe of East Africa, so far as my knowledge goes, who are definitely reported to employ the *Erythrophleum* in the

[1] In writing thus, I have before me, through the kindness of Sir David Prain, a sketch map of the geographical distribution of *Erythrophleum*, drawn, and accompanied with full explanatory details, by Dr. O. Stapf of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew.

[2] See below, p. 370.

[3] See below, p. 401.

ordeal, are the Wanyamwesi, a large tribe of German East Africa to the south of the Victoria Nyanza. In the vast basin of the Congo, where the *Erythrophleum* is apparently absent, the poison used in the ordeal is probably either imported or derived from a native tree or plant of a different sort.

Geographical and racial boundaries of the poison ordeal in Africa.

On a general survey of the distribution of the poison ordeal in Africa, we may say that the custom has very definite boundaries both geographical and racial. Geographically, it is confined to the tropical area, with which it nearly coincides except on the north-east; racially, it is confined to the Bantus and to the true negroes, while with the single reported exception of the Gallas, it appears to be unknown to the other native races of Africa, such as the Bushmen, the Hottentots, the Nilotics, and the Abyssinians. It is not a little remarkable that of Bantu and Nilotic tribes, living side by side in East Africa, the former should regularly practise, and the latter should regularly abstain from, this fatal custom. The sharp distinction suggests, that mere local contiguity and similarity of natural surroundings do not always suffice to bridge the deep cleft which racial instincts and habits form between different peoples.

From these general considerations we may now turn to the particular evidence for the practice of the poison ordeal in Africa. In marshalling it, I shall follow the geographical order, beginning with the west coast, where the poison ordeal has prevailed from Senegal in the north to Angola in the south, spreading also far into the interior along the great valleys of the Niger and Congo.

The poison ordeal among the Balantes of Senegal.

The Balantes are a tribe of pagan negroes now settled on the left bank of the river Casamance in Senegal, not far from Sedhiou. They are a race of invaders, who have descended from the highlands of the interior, driving feebler tribes before them. A nation of freebooters, they regard robbery and pillage as the noblest occupations of man. For the most part they disdain the labour of agriculture, and prefer to roam their vast forests in search of game, attacking the wild beasts which abound there, gathering the wax of the wild bees, and collecting the tusks of dead

elephants, which they barter for gunpowder and strong waters. Their villages are filthy within, but viewed from without they present a pleasing aspect, the palisades which surround them being festooned with flowering creepers. Inside the palisades are collected at night the herds of cattle, which they love to possess, but the flesh of which they seldom eat except at festivals and the funerals of great men. Their religion is a gross system of fetichism, and they stand in great fear of witches and wizards. Accusations of witchcraft are extremely common. A branch of a tree or a bunch of flowers placed by night outside a hut is enough to draw down on the owner a charge of witchcraft, and he is forced to purge himself from the dark suspicion by appealing to the poison ordeal. Not that his accuser is exempt from danger; if it appears that his charge is baseless, he in his turn may have to drain the poisoned cup or be sold as a slave for the benefit of his intended victim. Every person, whether man or woman, who is accused of witchcraft must repair on a certain day, under the escort of the notables, to the place appointed for the ordeal. Any refusal to comply with this obligation, any attempt to evade it, are crimes which society punishes by burning the culprit alive. Arrived at the seat of judgment the accused receives a cup of poison from the official whose duty it is to conduct the ordeal. The poison is brewed by pounding in a mortar the bark of a certain tree, which the Balantes call *mansone* or *bourdane*. Having drained the cup in the presence of the notables, the accused hastens to a neighbouring spring, where he gulps a great quantity of water, while his friends souse his whole body with water drawn from the fountain. His eyes are now staring, his mouth gaping, sweat bursts in beads from every part of his skin. If he can vomit up the poison, he is acquitted and suffers no other ill consequences than a few days' indisposition; if despite all his efforts he is unable to rid himself of the morbid matter, he falls into convulsions, and within twenty or twenty-five minutes after drinking the draught he drops to the earth like a stone. Succumbing to the effects of the poison, the poor wretch is of course set down as a witch or wizard who has richly deserved his or her fate; and his

goods, if he has any, are divided among the notables of his village. This arrangement naturally leads to the frequent detection, or at least accusation, of sorcery. However, the rigour of the law is mercifully tempered by an appeal to the pity or the pocket of the official whose duty it is to brew and administer the poison; for he proportions the strength, or rather the weakness, of the dose to the value of the considerations he has received from the accused or his friends. For this purpose he, or rather she (for the poisoner is generally an old woman), pays a series of domiciliary visits in the village where the patient resides on whom she is shortly to operate; and entering into communication with his kinsfolk she supplies them with good advice or, what they appreciate still more, a powerful antidote, according to the liberality with which they reward these friendly advances. Thus mercy seasons justice among the Balantes.[1]

A later account of the poison ordeal among the Balantes.

From a later account we gather that this form of judicial murder continued to enjoy the highest degree of popularity among the Balantes down at least to near the end of the nineteenth century. Like many savages in many parts of the world, these people imagine that there is no such thing as death from natural causes. All deaths and indeed all misfortunes, such as epidemics, the failure of crops, the ravages of locusts, and the outbreak of fires, are set down by them to the nefarious arts of sorcerers, those wicked and dangerous beings who have assumed the human form in order to prey on human flesh. The poison ordeal, which rid society of these pests, was therefore regarded as a public benefit, and its administration was hailed with an outburst of general joy and rejoicing. Everybody from the neighbourhood flocked as to a festival to witness and participate in the ceremony. None dared to absent himself; for any who shrank from the test would be branded with infamy, hounded out by his own family, and banished the country, with the loss

[1] L. J. B. Bérenger-Féraud, *Les Peuplades de la Sénégambie* (Paris, 1879), pp. 299-306. The tree from which the Balantes and other tribes of Senegal and the French Sudan obtain the poison for the ordeal is probably the *Erythrophleum guineense*, which, as I learn from Dr. O. Stapf, of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, is found all over this region, to the exclusion, apparently, of any other species of *Erythrophleum*.

of all his property. So the people came in crowds. Youths and maidens, mothers with babies at the breast, men in the prime of life, old men in their decline, all hastened to the scene of action, carrying presents for the poisoner and eager to demonstrate their innocence by drinking the poison. Children of ten years came dancing with their parents to brave death. For all were admitted to drain the fatal cup, though all had to pay a fee equivalent to about two and a half francs for the privilege. Poor people saved up to buy the chance, about one in four, of dying in agony. Some begged in the neighbouring villages, others worked for white people to earn the price of the poison. Most of them, unable to pay in cash, paid in kind with rice, silk, or cloth; some clubbed together to purchase a goat. Only the richest could afford an ox. The ordeal took place in a clearing of the forest at a distance from the village. The time was the first hour of the day. The people arrived singing, from various quarters, and grouping themselves in a circle round the poisoner, who shone resplendent in his richest robes, loaded with amulets and copper bracelets, they spread out their offerings before him. As each drank the poison from the calabash, he ran into the woods and sat down under a tree. Some, seized by a fit of sickness, vomited up the poison and were saved; others expired, it is said, without convulsions in a few hours. The victims became at once the objects of public hatred and execration as the authors of all the ills that had lately befallen the village. The husband who had lost his wife, the father who had lost his children, vented his rage on the lifeless bodies, which were stripped and cast naked into the forest to be devoured by vultures and hyenas. The survivors returned with songs of triumph to their villages; the happy day was celebrated with the beating of drums and with banquets; the poisoner was loaded with presents as a reward for the murders he had perpetrated; and all rejoiced over the riddance of the sorcerers, confident that the troubles which had so long visited their homes were now over, and firm in the belief that the dead, who but a few hours before had been their dear friends or beloved and loving parents, were no better than witches or wizards, who had come in

human form to destroy and devour humanity. A fourth of the population was computed to perish in these orgies of poison.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Bagnouns of the Casamance River.

The course of justice, or rather of injustice, is similar among the Bagnouns, another tribe of negroes on the Casamance River, who are reputed to have been in former days the most powerful people of this region. They are a peaceable and honest folk, subsisting partly by agriculture and partly by hunting, and excessively addicted to the pleasures of intoxication. The brawls which result from their drinking bouts tend to thin the surplus population, and entail little or no practical inconvenience on the homicide, who shows a clean pair of heels until his friends have succeeded in soothing the grief, and satisfying the cupidity, of the victim's family. Their religion is pagan, but they are not above purchasing charms from Mohammedan marabouts, and crosses and medals from Portuguese priests, which they employ with equal faith and equal success in protecting themselves against all the mischances of life on earth. Faith in witchcraft is with them, as with practically all African peoples, an article of their creed, and accusations of practising that black art are promulgated under the shadow of night by a personage known as Mumbo Jumbo, who parades the village at unseasonable hours, his face hidden by a mask and his body disguised with a mantle of leaves. All whom he denounces as witches or wizards must demonstrate their innocence or guilt, as the case may be, by an appeal to the poison ordeal.[2]

The poison ordeal among the Sereres of Senegambia.

The same ordeal is resorted to, though in a milder form, by the Sereres, a people of mixed origin who inhabit the coast of Senegambia from Cape Verd on the north to the Gambia River on the south. Resisting alike the allurements and the menaces of Mohammedan mission-

[1] Ém. Perrot et Ém. Vogt, *Poisons de Flèches et Poisons d'Épreuve* (Paris, 1913), pp. 38-40, from notes made in 1895. According to this account, the poisoner employed by the Balantes was never a member of the tribe, but always a stranger, usually a Diola. With the extension of French influence a check has been placed on the scourge, which was depopulating the country. The poison ordeal is now forbidden, though it may still be carried out secretly in remote districts.

[2] L. J. B. Bérenger-Féraud, *Les Peuplades de la Sénégambie*, pp. 293-299. The writer gives *Mamma Diombo* as the title of the masked personage. It is obviously identical with our Mumbo Jumbo.

aries, the Sereres have remained faithful to their own special form of paganism. They adore two gods, one of whom, named Takhar, presides over justice; while the other is charged with the more important, or at all events the more popular, function of presiding over property. From this we may perhaps infer that among these benighted heathen the spheres of justice and property do not coincide with that rigid and inflexible accuracy which happily characterizes them in Christian Europe. However, the two negro deities have this much in common that they both reside in the tallest trees of the forest. Hence the deep woods are for the Sereres invested with religious awe, and immemorial trees are their venerable sanctuaries. Thither the pious repair and deposit their offerings in the solemn shade at the foot of the giants of the forest. Of offerings to the God of Justice we hear nothing, but offerings to the God of Property appear to be frequent, if not always valuable. Formerly, indeed, they were often of considerable value, and by a mysterious dispensation of providence invariably disappeared the very next night from the foot of the tree at which they were deposited. Nowadays under the influence of a barren and paralysing scepticism, which has spread its ravages even into depths of the African wilderness, the stream of offerings exhibits an alarming tendency to dry up, and so far as it still flows it consists of little more than the horns, hoofs, and offal of the sacrificial victims, of which the flesh has been consumed by the worshippers. These ignoble oblations, singularly enough, exhibit no propensity to disappear either by day or by night, but gather in festering heaps at the foot of the trees till they rot where they lie. However, if little provision is made for the support of the God of Justice, his priests are in a somewhat better case. They are old men recruited in certain families and charged with the lucrative business of judging all cases of theft and witchcraft. In the discharge of his judicial functions the priest contrives to discover the theft by playing on the superstitious fears of the thief, and to detect the witchcraft by administering the usual dose of poison to the suspected witch. But the brew which he compounds for the latter purpose is seldom strong enough to prove fatal; the deaths

The God of Justice and the God of Property.

which ensue from it, we read, are just frequent enough to maintain in the minds of the vulgar a wholesome fear of the divinity.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Landamas and Naloos of Senegal.

Among the Landamas, or Landoomans, and the Naloos, two pagan tribes, who inhabit the neighbourhood of the Rio Nuñez in Senegal, there exists a secret society whose grand master bears the title of Simo. He lives in the woods and is never seen by the uninitiated. Sometimes he assumes the form of a pelican, sometimes he is wrapt in the skins of wild beasts, sometimes he is covered from head to foot with leaves, which conceal his real shape.[2] As usual, these pagans "believe in sorcery and witchcraft; whoever is suspected of sorcery is forthwith delivered to the Simo, who acts as chief magistrate. The accused is questioned, and if he confesses, he is condemned to pay a fine; if, on the other hand, he maintains his innocence, he is compelled to drink a liquor made with the bark of a tree which gives to water a beautiful red colour. The accused and the accuser are obliged to swallow the same medicine, or rather poison; they must drink it fasting and entirely naked, except that the accused is allowed a white pagne, which he wraps round his loins. The liquor is poured into a small calabash, and the accuser and accused are forced to take an equal quantity, until, unable to swallow more, they expel it or die. If the poison is expelled by vomiting, the accused is innocent and then he has a right to reparation; if it passes downwards, he is deemed not absolutely innocent; and if it should not pass at all at the time, he is judged to be guilty. I have been assured that few of these wretched creatures survive this ordeal; they are compelled to drink so large a dose of the poison, that they die almost immediately. If, however, the family of the accused consent to pay an indemnity, the unhappy patient is excused from drinking any more liquor; he is then put into a bath of tepid water, and by the application of both feet to the

[1] L. J. B. Bérenger-Féraud, *Les Peuplades de la Sénégambie* (Paris, 1879), pp. 273-278.

[2] Réné Caillié, *Travels through Central Africa to Timbuctoo* (London, 1830), i. 153 *sqq.* As to this secret society, see also L. J. B. Bérenger-Féraud, *Les Peuplades de la Sénégambie*, pp. 341 *sqq.*; and as to the two tribes, *id.*, pp. 313 *sqq.*, 316 *sq.* According to the latter writer, a considerable proportion of the Naloos now profess Islam, though the rigidity of the creed is tempered by addiction to palm-wine.

abdomen they make him cast up the poison which he has swallowed."[1]

The poison ordeal among the Mossi of Upper Senegal or the French Sudan.

The poison ordeal is found in a variety of forms among some tribes of Upper Senegal or the French Sudan; for example, it occurs among the Mossi, a pagan people of mixed blood formed by the fusion of conquering invaders with subject aborigines, who occupy a vast plain in the great bend of the Niger, a little to the north of the Gold Coast. Their capital is Wagadugu (Ouaghadougou). Thus at Dembo, in the district of Yatenga, when any young person died unexpectedly, it was customary to make the whole population swear by the Earth that they had not killed him or her by sorcery, and to attest their innocence they had to drink a draught of water mixed with a red powder, which was supposed to kill the guilty. The nature of this red powder is not mentioned, but we may conjecture that it was prepared from the pounded bark of the so-called sass or sassy wood (*Erythrophleum guineense*), which furnishes the poison employed in the ordeal over a great part of Africa. In other villages of the same district the draught which the accused must drink in order to refute a charge of witchcraft was tinctured, not with the red powder, but with earth taken from the sacrificial places. This is like the Hebrew custom of mixing the bitter water with dust from the sanctuary. All who refused to purge themselves by the ordeal were put to death. At Kabayoro, a Mossi village in the canton of Koumbili, when a man or woman fell sick without any manifest cause, they laid the sickness at the door of a witch or wizard; and should the patient die, they washed the hands of the corpse in water and compelled the suspected sorcerer to drink the potion, protesting his innocence and imprecating death on his own head if he lied. If he were guilty, the corpse-tinctured water was supposed to kill him; but if he were innocent, it did him no harm.[2]

The water of the ordeal tinctured with earth from sacred places or used to wash the hands of the corpse.

In this last form of the ordeal the fatal effect of

[1] Réné Caillié, *Travels through Central Africa to Timbuctoo* (London, 1830), i. 156 *sq.*

[2] Louis Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan* (Paris, 1912), pp. 580 *sq.* As to the Mossi and their country, see *id.*, pp. 9 *sq.*, 24 *sq.*, 451 *sqq.* The territory occupied by them extends between 11° and 14° North latitude and between 2° and 5° West longitude.

The custom of mixing the water of the ordeal with sacred earth is common among tribes of the French Sudan.

the draught is clearly attributed, not to a vegetable poison, but to the deadly influence which the corpse is believed to exert over the murderer. Among the tribes in this district of the French Sudan the ordeal by drinking water mixed with sacred earth is apparently common. In every case the earth employed for this purpose seems to be drawn from the place where sacrifices are offered to Earth, a great divinity in these parts, and frequently the oath is administered by the priest, who bears the title of Chief of the Earth. For example, at Pissié, a village of the Kassounas-Fras tribe, whenever any person died suddenly, and his death was, as usual, ascribed to witchcraft, the chief of the village, who was also the priest of Earth, compelled all the adults of that particular ward, men and women, to come forth from their houses and attend him to the place where sacrifices were offered to Earth in the middle of the village. There he took earth from the holy spot, and putting it in water obliged all to swallow the draught and to swear their innocence under pain of being killed by the divinity. Sometimes, we are told, the guilty wretch who denied his crime was slain by the Earth, to whose divinity he had falsely appealed.[1] Here the death of the criminal is evidently supposed to be wrought by the particles of divine earth which he has rashly taken into his stomach. Similarly at Saveloo, a village of the Bouras, an aboriginal and primitive tribe of the Gold Coast, when a death occurred and the relations of the deceased were of opinion that he had been taken off by sorcery, the chief of the village forced both the accuser and the accused to drink a potion containing dust and earth which had been taken from the sacrificial place of the deified Earth. As they drank they swore, praying that the draught might kill them if they forswore themselves. One of the two was believed always to fall a victim to the deadly power of the holy dust and earth in his belly; and the chief of the village thereupon confiscated or, as the natives put it, "collected," the personal property of the supposed culprit and seized his children as slaves.[2] Among the Dagaris and Zangas, two heathen tribes whose

[1] L. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, pp. 229 *sq.*

[2] L. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, p. 292.

territories lie partly in the French Sudan and partly in the British Gold Coast, the ordeal and oath were similar; and among them, it is said, the belly of the guilty person, who had drunk the water and forsworn himself, would sometimes swell up, so that he died. In such cases the deified Earth was believed to have punished him for his crime.[1] We may compare the effect of the bitter water in the Hebrew ordeal, which was thought to cause the belly of the adulteress to swell and her thigh to fall away. In some villages of these tribes the ordeal was conducted by the chief of the village and the priest of Earth jointly, and both the accuser and the accused were compelled to submit to it. The divine Earth was always expected to kill the sorcerer; and if, as sometimes happened, both parties succumbed under the test, it was, in the belief of the natives, because both were guilty of witchcraft.[2]

Ordeal of poisoned arrows among the Kassounas-Fras of the French Sudan.

Sometimes among the natives of this region a real poison is made use of in the ordeal, but is administered to the suspected person in a different way through the instrumentality of a poisoned arrow. Thus among the Kassounas-Fras, when a family complained to the chief of the village that one of their members had perished through witchcraft, the chief used to assemble all the villagers with the exception of the children. A branch was next cut in the sacred grove of the village, and the hair of the deceased was fastened to it. After that, a fowl was decapitated and its head buried at a distance in the earth. Thereupon two young virgins took the branch on their shoulders and went in search of the head of the decapitated fowl. In virtue of its supernatural powers the branch was supposed always to guide its bearers straight to the spot; and having thus demonstrated its infallibility the bough was next invited to point out in like manner the witch or wizard whose wicked arts had caused the death. In some villages the branch, thus adjured, always designated several persons as the culprits, and in order to ascertain the real criminal the following expedient was adopted. The poisoned arrows belonging to the deceased were laid on his grave, and after-

Use of a sacred bough as an instrument of divination.

[1] L. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, p. 375.

[2] L. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, p. 376.

wards the suspected sorcerers pricked themselves with the infected blades. The guilty perished, the innocent survived and felt no ill effects from the poison, thus demonstrating the nice perception and delicate discrimination of the poison beyond the reach of cavil.[1] Among the Bouras of the Gold Coast the course of justice was similar. When a man or woman was believed to have been done to death by witchcraft, which, as usual, happened whenever the deceased was young and no obvious cause could be assigned for his or her dissolution, the priest of Earth would cause some locks of his or her hair to be cut and a branch of a holy tree to be fetched from the sacred grove. Hair and branch were then wrapt in an old mat and hung on a pole, which two young virgins put on their heads and carried about, until the branch led them to single out two men among the assembled villagers. These two men, thus pointed out by the finger of Providence, thereupon put the mat and its sacred contents on their heads and pranced about in like manner until the infallible branch bumped up against the sorcerer. If in the course of its gyrations the bough collided with several of the spectators, a doubt remained as to which of the persons thus incriminated was really the miscreant. The doubt was then solved by the ordeal of the poisoned arrows. The accused pricked themselves with the blade of an arrow which had been dipped in poison, and as they did so, they cried, "May the arrow kill me if I am a sorcerer! If I am a sorcerer, may the poison slay me!" As usual, the innocent survived, and the guilty perished. If any man refused to submit to the ordeal, his refusal was treated as equivalent to a confession of guilt; so without more ado they tied him up in the blazing sun and left him there without food or drink till death released him from his sufferings.[2]

Ordeal of poisoned arrows among the Bouras of the Gold Coast. Use of a sacred bough and of the hair of the deceased as instruments of divination.

In these cases it is probably the hair of the deceased which, fastened to the sacred branch, is supposed to be mainly instrumental in tracking down the guilty sorcerer.

Questioning a corpse as to the cause of its death.

[1] L. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, p. 228.

[2] L. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, p. 291. Among the Kassounas-Bouras the ordeal of the poisoned arrows was similar (*id.*, p. 315). The poison which these people use in the ordeal may be obtained either from *Erythrophleum guineense* or from *Erythrophleum micranthum*, since both these species of the tree occur on the Gold Coast. See above, pp. 309 *sq.*

Among some tribes of Sierra Leone the delicate task of detecting the murderer used to be laid upon the corpse. Being stretched on a bier and hoisted on to the heads of six young people, it was strictly questioned as to the cause of its death, and gave its answers either by impelling its bearers forward, which signified "Yes," or by lurching to the side, which signified "No." The interrogatories were put to the corpse by a relation or friend of the deceased, who acted as coroner, holding in his hand a green bough, which we may conjecture to have been cut from a sacred tree. When the cross-examination reached the point at which it became necessary to denounce the wizard whose wicked art had cut short the thread of life, and the criminal happened to be one of the dead man's own relations, the corpse, with a delicacy of sentiment which did it honour, usually remained silent for a time, as if ashamed to accuse its own flesh and blood. But truth must out, and the coroner was pressing. Holding out the bough towards the bier, he asked whether the corpse was perfectly certain in its own mind of its murderer, and if so, let it come forward like a man and strike the hand which held the bough. Thus put on its honour, the dead body had no choice but to comply with the injunction. It did come forward, dragging its bearers with it, and bumped up against the bough. To put the thing beyond a doubt, the bump was repeated two or three times.[1] What followed the detection of the criminal may be described in the words of an Englishman who resided in Sierra Leone before the country became a British Colony, and while the old pagan customs were still strictly observed :—

The poison ordeal in Sierra Leone.

"The culprit is then seized, and if a witch sold without further ceremony: and it frequently happens if the deceased were a great man, and the accused poor, not only he himself but his whole family are sold together. But if the death of the deceased was caused by poison, the offender is reserved for a further trial; from which, though it is in some measure voluntary, he seldom escapes with life. After depositing the

[1] John Matthews, *A Voyage to the River Sierra-Leone* (London, 1791), pp. 121-124. The writer, a naval lieutenant, resided in Sierra Leone in the years 1785, 1786, 1787. The first colony was planted in 1787, but the administration was not taken over by the British Crown until 1807. See *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, Ninth Edition, xxii. (Edinburgh, 1887) p. 45.

corpse in the grave, which is hung round with mats, and his most valued clothes and necessaries put in with him, they confine the accused in such a manner that he can release himself; which signifies to him that he has transgressed the laws of his country, and is no longer at liberty. As soon as it is dark he escapes to the next town, and there claims the protection of the head man, who is supposed to be an impartial person; informs him that the corpse of such a person has accused him of causing his death by poison; that he is innocent, and desires that to prove it he may drink red water. This request is always allowed, and the friends of the deceased are sent for to be witnesses. At the time appointed the accused is placed upon a kind of high chair, stripped of his common apparel, and a quantity of plantain leaves are wrapped round his waist. Then in presence of the whole town, who are always assembled upon these occasions, he first eats a little colá or rice, and then drinks the poisoned water. If it kills him, which it is almost sure to do, he is pronounced guilty; but if he escapes with life after drinking five or six quarts and throwing up the rice or colá unchanged by the digestive powers of the stomach, he is judged innocent, but yet not entirely so till the same hour next day. During the interval he is not allowed to ease nature by any evacuations; and should he not be able to restrain them, it would be considered as strong a proof of his guilt as if he had fallen a victim to the first draught. And to prevent the least possibility of the medicine's not operating, should any remain in the stomach, they oblige the accused to join in the rejoicings made for his escape, which consists in singing and dancing all night. After being fairly acquitted by this ordeal trial, he is held in higher estimation than formerly, and brings a palaver, or, to speak in the professional language of my friend, an action against the friends of the deceased, for defamation or false imprisonment, which is generally compromised by a payment adequate to the supposed injury.

Variations in the ceremonies of the ordeal in the different tribes of Sierra Leone.

. . . Though the ceremonies above related are constantly practised, yet the different tribes have different methods of performing them. The Suzeés carry the whole body, but the Timmaneys and Bullams only the clothes the deceased had on at the time of his death, and the nails of his hands

and feet, which they cut off immediately after he is expired, and which they hold to have the same power to answer the questions proposed, as if the whole body was present, in which no doubt they are right." The writer adds that in the interior parts of Sierra Leone the practice of drinking red water upon every trifling occasion was attended with such fatal consequences as threatened to depopulate the country, and so strongly were the common people, particularly the women, prepossessed in favour of its infallibility that the ordeal could not be suppressed, though it had been rendered much less frequent by a simple expedient. The friends of both parties came "armed as in a Polish diet" to the judgment seat, and the moment the poison had done its work on the body of the accused, his partisans rushed at the partisans of the accuser and took summary vengeance on their persons for the death of their friend, if he died, and for slander and defamation of character, if he did not. Thus the balance of justice was redressed by an appeal to club law, and the fear of such an appeal seems to have operated as a wholesome deterrent on the minds of the litigious.[1]

Use of the clothes and nails of the deceased in the interrogatory.

From this account of the judicial ordeal, as it used to be practised in Sierra Leone, we may infer that the custom in the French Sudan of employing the hair of the deceased to detect his supposed murderer is only a curtailment or extenuation of an older custom of employing the whole corpse for the same purpose. Just as the corpse, by the impulses which it communicates to its bearers, is believed to answer the questions put to it by the man who holds the green bough, so the hair of the deceased, attached to a sacred bough, impels its bearers in the direction of the real or supposed criminal; and among the Timmaneys and Bullams, as we have just seen, the clothes and cut nails of the dead man are employed to work the oracle in a similar manner.

The use of the hair or nails of the deceased in the interrogatory is a substitute for the use of the corpse.

The ordeal of the red water has been more fully described by another observer, who wrote before the administration of Sierra Leone was taken over by the British Crown; and as his description contains some interesting particulars, I will quote it in full:—

Another account of the poison ordeal in Sierra Leone.

"In the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone, the most usual

[1] John Matthews, *A Voyage to the River Sierra-Leone*, pp. 124-130.

The red water.

mode of trial resembles that by bitter water, formerly in use among the Jews, and is called *red water* by the Africans. A person accused of theft or of witchcraft endeavours, if innocent, to repel the charge by drinking red water. A palaver is first held among the old people of the town, to whom the accusation is made by one party, and protestations of innocence by the other; and if they determine that it shall be settled by a public trial, the accused fixes on some neighbouring town, to which he repairs, and informs the head man of his wish to drink red water there. A palaver is again held to determine whether his request shall be granted; if not, he must seek some other town. In case of the head man's acquiescence, the accused remains in the town concealed from strangers, sometimes for two or three months, before the day of trial is appointed. When that is fixed, notice is sent to the accuser three days before, that he may attend with as many of his friends as he chuses.

How the red water is prepared.

"The red water is prepared by infusing the bark of a tree, called by the Bulloms *kwon*, by the Timmanees *okwon*, and by the Soosoos *millee*,[1] in water, to which it imparts a powerfully emetic, and sometimes a purgative quality. In some instances it has proved immediately fatal, which leads to a suspicion that occasionally some other addition must be made to it, especially as it does not appear that the delicate are more liable to be thus violently affected by it than the robust. To prevent, however, any suspicion of improper conduct, the red water is always administered in the most public manner, in the open air, and in the midst of a large concourse of people, who upon these solemn occasions never fail to assemble from all quarters, particularly the women, to whom it affords as good an opportunity of displaying their finery and taste in dress, as a country wake in England does to the neighbouring females. The accused is placed upon a kind of stool about three feet high, one hand being held up and the other placed upon his thigh, and beneath the seat are spread a number of fresh plantain leaves. A circle of about seven or eight feet in diameter is formed round the prisoner,

The administration of the poison.

[1] "This bark is the same which is stated above to be used as an ordeal on the Gold Coast." It is most probably the bark of the *Erythrophleum guineense*, which is a native of Sierra Leone.

and no one is admitted within it but the person who prepares the red water. The bark is publicly exposed, to shew that it is genuine. The operator first washes his own hands and then the bark, as well as the mortar and pestle with which it is to be powdered, to prove that nothing improper is concealed there. When powdered, a calibash full is mixed in a large brass pan full of water, and is stirred quickly with a kind of whisk until covered with a froth like a lather of soap. A variety of ceremonies, prayers, etc., are performed at the same time, and the accused is repeatedly and solemnly desired to confess the crime with which he has been charged. A little before he begins to drink the infusion, he is obliged to wash his mouth and spit the water out, to shew that he has nothing concealed in it: a little rice or a piece of kola is then given him to eat, being the only substance he is allowed to take for twelve hours previous to the trial; and, in order to prevent his obtaining anything else, he is narrowly watched during that space of time by a number of people, who are responsible for his conduct. After having repeated a prayer dictated to him, which contains an imprecation upon himself if he be guilty, the red water is administered to him in a calibash capable of holding about half a pint, which he empties eight, ten, or a dozen times successively, as quick as it can be filled. It probably now begins to exert its emetic powers, but he must notwithstanding persist in drinking until the rice or kola be brought up, which is easily seen upon the plantain leaves spread below. Should vomiting not be caused, and the medicine produce purgative effects the person is condemned immediately; or if it be suspected that the whole of what he has eaten is not brought up, he is permitted to retire, but with this reserve, that if the medicine shall produce no effect upon his bowels until next day at the same hour, he is then, and not before, pronounced innocent; otherwise he is accounted guilty. When the red water proves purgative, it is termed 'spoiling the red water.' The utmost quantity which may be swallowed is sixteen calibashes full; if these have not the desired effect, the prisoner is not allowed to take any more. When neither vomiting nor purging are produced, the red water causes violent pains in the bowels, which are considered as marks of guilt: in such cases they

The effect of the poison.

endeavour to recover the patient by exciting vomiting; and to sheathe the acrimony of the red water they give him raw eggs to swallow. In some instances the person has died after drinking the fourth calibash. If the rice or kola be long in coming up, it is common for some of the culprit's friends to come near, and to accuse him with great violence of some trifling fault; for they suppose, if anything prejudicial to his character were concealed, it would prevent the favourable operation of the red water. Women at such a time, when the trial is for witchcraft or some other crime and not for adultery, have an excellent opportunity of proving their chastity before the world, by publicly declaring that they have proved faithful to their husband, and wishing that they may be punished if they have spoken falsely: this is looked upon as a most irrefragable proof of fidelity.

The verdict and the sentence.

"When the accused is permitted to leave the tripod upon which he is seated, he is ordered to move his arms and legs, to shew that he has not lost the use of them, and immediately runs back into the town, followed by all the women and boys shouting and hallooing. People who have undergone this trial and have escaped, acquire from that circumstance additional consequence and respect. When acquitted, they dress, particularly the women, in their best clothes, and visit all their friends and acquaintances, who receive them with many tokens of affection and regard. When the accused dies upon the spot, which frequently happens; or when the red water *is spoiled*, and the party is too old to sell; one of his family, unless he can redeem himself by a slave, is taken and sold. Sometimes, for want of a proper opportunity, the affair remains unsettled for many years, and I knew an instance of a young man having actually been sold as a slave, because his *grand-mother* had spoiled red water many years before he was born."[1]

Comparison with the bitter water of the Hebrews.

From this account we learn that negro women demonstrate their fidelity to their husbands by drinking red water,

[1] Thomas Winterbottom, M. D. (Physician to the Colony of Sierra Leone), *An Account of the Native Africans in the Neighbourhood of Sierra Leone* (London, 1803), pp. 129-133. The poison ordeal seems not to be obsolete in Sierra Leone even under British rule. According to one account, the accuser as well as the accused has, or had, to swallow the poisonous decoction of *akon* bark. See Northcote W. Thomas, *Anthropological Report on Sierra Leone* (London, 1916), i. 48.

just as Hebrew women of old demonstrated their domestic virtue quite as conclusively by drinking bitter water and calling down curses on their heads, or rather on their stomachs and legs, if they lied. So like is human nature, or human folly, all the world over.

The poison ordeal in Liberia.

Amongst the free negroes of Liberia, to the south of Sierra Leone, the poison ordeal is still in vogue, though it is said to be disappearing among the Kru people of this region in consequence of the frequent intercourse which the Kru men, as sailors and traders, maintain with Europeans. The poison is prepared from the bark of the *Erythrophleum guineense*, a tall forest tree which grows commonly in West Africa. In popular language the decoction is known as sassy-wood. If the accused vomits up the poison, he is deemed innocent; if he dies under its influence, he is guilty; if he neither voids the poison nor dies, he is given an emetic to relieve him and is advised to quit the village and find a home elsewhere. Among the Grebo people of Liberia there exists a secret society called Kwi-iru for the detection and punishment of witches and wizards, and the persons whom members of the society denounce are obliged to clear themselves of the charge of witchcraft by submitting to the poison ordeal in presence of the assembled people. An officer of the society pounds the bark in a mortar, pours water on it, and having decanted the poisonous liquor into a wooden bowl, he prays to God that if the accused be innocent, he may vomit the poison, but that if he be guilty, it may kill him. The suspected wizard or witch then drains the draught, and according to its effect he or she is deemed to have been rightly or wrongly accused.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Kru negroes.

A writer of the seventeenth century has described the poison ordeal as it was practised at that time by the Kru negroes in the kingdom of Quoja, on the coast of what is now Liberia. When the relations of a dead man suspected that his death had been brought about by foul play, they questioned the ghost in order to discover the murderer or magician who had done the deed. For this purpose they

[1] Sir Harry Johnston, *Liberia* (London, 1906), ii. 1064-1070. Dr. O. Stapf, of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, thinks that the tree from which the poison is obtained in Liberia for the ordeal may be either *Erythrophleum guineense* or *Erythrophleum micranthum*.

took the corpse, or one of the garments of the deceased, together with clippings of his hair and parings of his nails, and adding some pieces or filings of certain woods, they made the whole into a bundle, and fastened it to one of the pestles used in pounding rice. The two ends of the pestle were then laid on the heads of two men, who supported the burden, while a third man questioned the ghost as to the author of his death. The answers were given by the two men who bore the corpse or his bodily relics; according as they nodded or shook their heads, the spirit was understood to reply yes or no. If the person whom the ghost accused of having murdered him denied his guilt, he was compelled to undergo the ordeal called *quony*. "This *quony* is the bark of a tree of the same name; its juice is extracted in presence of the friends of the accused without any trickery. Then having scraped the outside of the bark into water, and pounded the scrapings in a mortar, they give the liquor to the accused to drink, after it has been allowed to stand and the lees have sunk to the bottom. The taste of the liquor is bitter. The accused gets about a potful of it to drink fasting in the morning. If he dies, his body is burnt or thrown into the river as that of a poisoner; but if he escapes, he is deemed innocent."[1]

The use of the hair and nails of the deceased in the interrogatory.

The procedure is, or was till lately, similar on the Ivory Coast, which adjoins Liberia on the east. The Neyaux of that coast believe that no man dies naturally, and that all deaths are the effect of witchcraft. Hence, in order to detect the witch or wizard who has caused any particular death, they take a garment of the deceased, a handful of his hair, and some parings of his nails. These things, wrapt up in vegetable fibres and reeds, are attached to a long bamboo, which is then carried through the village by two men, who invoke the spirit of the deceased, crying out, "Come with us." They must prepare themselves for their office by a fast of twenty-four hours and by passing a sleepless night, during which they are excited to the highest pitch by music and dancing. In carrying their burden they reel like

The poison ordeal among the Neyaux of the Ivory Coast. The use of the hair and nails of the deceased to detect his supposed murderer.

[1] O. Dapper, *Description d'Afrique* (Amsterdam, 1686), p. 263. The writer calls the natives of the country *Carous* (p. 252), which I take to be equivalent to Kru. The name *quony* applied to the bark is clearly the same as the *kwon* and *akon* of other writers. See above, pp. 326, 328 note [1].

drunken men. Thus impelled, as they allege, by the soul of the dead man, they rush at the house inhabited by the person who caused the death by witchcraft, and burst it open by the impact of the bamboo which they carry. All the inmates of that house are obliged to drink a decoction prepared from the red bark of a tree which the natives call *boduru*. Having swallowed it, they must run till the poison takes effect; if they are innocent, it is rejected by the stomach; if they are guilty, they die in agony and convulsions. The French writer who reports the custom adds, "Evidently the chiefs make use of this ordeal in order to rid themselves of whomsoever they dislike. Nevertheless the natives have great confidence in the justice of 'the red wood' and drink it willingly." Indeed so common and popular was the appeal to the ordeal in this tribe, that the French had much difficulty in suppressing it. The practice was visibly depopulating the country; every natural death entailed four or five deaths by poison. When a certain chief named Mosess died, no less than fifteen persons, men and women, succumbed in the ordeal.[1]

The poison ordeal on the Gold Coast.

On the Gold Coast the wood which furnishes the poison for the ordeal is called *odum*. The accused either drinks a decoction of the wood or chews a piece of the wood and afterwards drinks a bowl of water. The poison acts both as an emetic and as a purge: if the accused vomits it up, he is acquitted; if he does not, his guilt is established. Women accused of adultery, for example, have to drink a brew of this poison in presence of a priest; the draught is believed to have power to burst the belly of an adulteress. Fear of the consequences, it is said, often leads unfaithful wives to confess their guilt.[2] But in these regions apparently

[1] *Gouvernement Général de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, Notices publiées par le Gouvernement Général à l'occasion de l'Exposition Coloniale de Marseille: la Côte d'Ivoire* (Corbeil, S.-et-O., 1906), pp. 570-572. The use of the poison ordeal at Great Bassam on the Ivory Coast is mentioned by H. Hecquard, *Reise an die Küste und in das Innere von West-Afrika* (Leipsic, 1854), p. 48.

[2] (Sir) A. B. Ellis, *The Tshi-speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast of West Africa* (London, 1887), pp. 198 *sq.*, 201; E. Perregaux, *Chez les Achanti* (Neuchâtel, 1906), p. 150; Brodie Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa* (London, 1853), i. 287, ii. 187. The tree from which the poison is procured for the ordeal may be either the *Erythrophleum guineense* or *Erythrophleum micranthum*, since both these species are native to the Gold Coast.

a draught of the poison was used to clinch an obligation as well as to demonstrate innocence; in other words, it confirmed an oath as well as constituted an ordeal. On this subject a writer of the seventeenth century, who served as Chief Factor of the Dutch at Elmina on the Gold Coast, tells us that, "when they drink the oath-draught, it is usually accompanied by an imprecation, that the Fetiche may kill them if they do not perform the contents of their obligation. Every person entering into any obligation is obliged to drink this swearing liquor. When any nation is hired to the assistance of another, all the chief ones are obliged to drink this liquor with an imprecation, that their Fetiche may punish them with death, if they do not assist them with utmost vigour to extirpate their enemy. . . . If you ask what opinion the negroes have of those who falsify their obligations confirmed by the oath-drink, they believe the perjured person shall be swelled by that liquor till he bursts; or if that doth not happen, that he shall shortly die of a languishing sickness: the first punishment they imagine more peculiar to women, who take this draught to acquit themselves of any accusation of adultery; and if I may be allowed to make a comparison, this drink seems very like the bitter water administered to the women in the Old Testament by way of purgation from the charge of adultery."[1] In this account it will be observed that nothing is said of a poison mingled with the liquor. Similarly a French traveller who visited the Gold Coast in the early part of the eighteenth century reports that "in certain cases an accused person is allowed to purge himself by an oath, which he does by drinking and eating his fetish, that is to say, by mixing some scrapings of his fetish in what he drinks and eats in presence of the judge and of his accuser. If he does not die within twenty-four hours, he is deemed innocent, and his accuser is condemned to pay a heavy fine to the king; but when there are several witnesses against an accused person, he is not allowed to take the oath on his fetish."[2] In these

Bosman's account of the poison ordeal on the Gold Coast.

[1] William Bosman, "Description of the Coast of Guinea," in John Pinkerton's *General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London, 1808–1814), xvi. 398.

[2] J. B. Labat, *Voyage du Chevalier Des Marchais en Guinée, Isles voisines, et à Cayenne* (Amsterdam, 1731), i. 328 *sq.*

cases the fatal result of the ordeal may have been due to the superstitious fears of the accused rather than to any poison inherent in the fetish.

The poison ordeal among the Atakpames of Togoland.

The Atakpames, an agricultural and pastoral tribe of Togoland, who speak a Yoruba language, do not believe in death from natural causes; they think that every person who dies has been done to death by somebody. And they hold that the dead man can bring to justice the wicked sorcerer who has cut short his thread of life. For this purpose the priests and priestesses put a stick in the dead man's hand and carry the corpse through all the streets of the town. The person at whom the corpse is supposed to point with the stick is suspected of having been the author of the death and must submit to the poison ordeal. When the body has been buried, the priestesses carry the head of a bird about, and more people are generally arrested on suspicion. All the suspected persons are conducted to a secret place in the forest, where there are two large stones distant about ten paces from each other. A calabash containing poison, brewed from the bark of a tree, is set on one of the stones, and the accused takes his stand on the other, with a small gourd-cup in his hand. On a signal given by the priest, he goes up to the calabash, fills his cup with the poison, drinks it, and returns to his place. This he must do thrice. If the poison works, death follows in a few minutes, preceded by breathlessness and violent cramps. He is then declared guilty; his heart is cut out, and his body is buried on the spot. Ordinarily people are buried in their houses according to the usual custom of Togoland. But if the accused person vomits up the poison, his life is safe and he is declared innocent. We are told, and can readily believe, that this ordeal places an immense power in the hands of the priests; the lives of the people are practically at their mercy. It is said that a single funeral is often the cause of several deaths by poison.[1]

The interrogation of the corpse.

The poison ordeal in other parts of Togoland.

At Aneho, on the coast of Togoland, there is a certain fetish named Nanyo, who is appealed to in all cases of death

[1] Dr. R. Plehn, "Beiträge zur Völkerkunde des Togo-Gebietes," *Mittheilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin*, ii. Dritte Abtheilung, *Afrikanische Studien* (Berlin and Stuttgart, 1899), p. 97.

which are suspected to be due to poison. If the accused denies his guilt, he must drink the fetish water. The priest makes him sit down on a stool and digs a small hole in the ground before him. Next he snips off some locks of the suspected prisoner's hair, pares his nails, and buries the clippings of the hair and the parings of the nails in the hole, together with a small fetish object which he has brought forth from the fetish hut. Having filled up the hole, the priest next touches all the joints of the accused person's body with a fetish stick, telling him that in these places he will experience the first ill effects of his crime, if he forswears himself. Then he hands a calabash of fetish water to the accused, who takes it in his left hand and drinks thrice out of it. This ends the ceremony, and all go home. If after drinking the water the man dies within seven days, he is supposed to have been killed by the fetish. The priests carry his body out of the village and deposit it on a scaffold, where it remains exposed to wind and weather. In the swampy districts about Degbenu the bleaching skeletons of many such victims of the ordeal may be seen.[1] The poison ordeal is also in vogue among the Bassari, an agricultural and pastoral tribe of pagans in the north of Togoland. The poison is brewed from the bark of a tree which is said not to grow in their country. An accused person must drink the poison in presence of the assembled people. If he vomits it up, he is innocent, and his acquittal is celebrated with public rejoicings. But if he cannot eject the poison, his guilt is considered manifest, and before the drug has time to take full effect, and while the sufferer is still in convulsions, he is cut down.[2]

The poison ordeal on the Slave Coast.

On the Slave Coast, as on the Gold Coast, the most common ordeal is, or rather used to be, the drinking a decoction of *odum* wood. The custom prevailed both among

[1] Lieutenant Herold, "Bericht betreffend religiöse Anschauungen und Gebräuche der deutschen Ewe-Neger," *Mittheilungen von Forschungsreisenden und Gelehrten aus den Deutschen Schutzgebieten*, v. Heft 4 (Berlin, 1892), p. 147; H. Klose, *Togo unter deutscher Flagge* (Berlin, 1899), pp. 269 *sq.*

[2] H. Klose, *Unter deutscher Flagge*, p. 505. For other references to the poison ordeal in Togoland, see also J. Spieth, *Die Religion der Eweer in Süd-Togo* (Leipsic, 1911), pp. 115, 238; Fr. Wolf, "Totemismus, soziale Gliederung und Rechtspflege bei einigen Stämmen Togos (Westafrika)," *Anthropos*, vi. (1911) p. 465.

the Ewe-speaking and the Yoruba-speaking peoples of this region. The potion is, as usual, prepared by a priest, who thus has it in his power to kill or save the accused according to the strength or weakness of the dose which he infuses into the liquor. If the poison is not at once rejected by the stomach, it kills the drinker, and the fetish is considered to have declared his guilt by slaying him. A guilty man dares not undergo the ordeal, but the innocent submit to it without fear, and indeed frequently demand it in order to prove their innocence; hence it is the guiltless who ordinarily perish.[1]

The poison ordeal at Benin.

In Benin the poison employed in the ordeal was the bark of the tree *Erythrophleum guineense*, popularly known as sauce-wood, sass-wood, or sassy-wood. The adjective *sass* is said to be a native word signifying "bad." The tree has a hard wood and a tall unbranched stem, terminating in a crown of boughs which bear small leaves. So firm was the faith of the people in the justice of the ordeal that in the consciousness of innocence they appealed to it voluntarily; sometimes they vomited up the poison and escaped, sometimes they retained it and perished. When the accused person vomited, his vomit was examined to see whether "the evil thing had come out."[2]

Use of the Calabar bean in the poison ordeal among the tribes of Southern Nigeria.

In Southern Nigeria, particularly among the tribes about Calabar, the poison employed in the ordeal is extracted from the Calabar bean (*Physostigma venenosum*), which the natives call *esere*. The plant has a climbing habit, like the scarlet runner, and attains a height of about fifty feet. The pods, which contain two or three seeds or beans, are six or seven inches long; the beans are about the size of a common horse bean, but much thicker, with a deep chocolate-brown colour. There is nothing in the aspect, taste, or smell of the bean to reveal its deadly nature or to distinguish it

[1] (Sir) A. B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa* (London, 1894), pp. 190 *sq.*; *id.*, *The Ewe-speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa* (London, 1890), p. 97; l'Abbé Pierre Bouche, *La Côte des Esclaves et le Dahomey* (Paris, 1885), pp. 174-176.

[2] H. Ling Roth, *Great Benin* (Halifax, England, 1903), pp. 88 *sq.* As to the sass-wood tree, see Mary H. Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* (London, 1897), p. 464. It may, as Dr. O. Stapf of Kew points out to me, be either the *Erythrophleum guineense* or *Erythrophleum micranthum*, since both these species of the tree are found in Southern Nigeria.

from any harmless leguminous seed. The action of the poison is very rapid.[1] As to the prevalence of the ordeal among the tribes and its fatal effect on the population, so long as it was permitted to extend its ravages unchecked, I will quote the evidence of a missionary who lived for many years in the district :—

The poison ordeal at Calabar.

"In the administration of their laws, or customs, which stand in the place of laws, the Calabar people, when other means fail, have recourse to ordeals and oaths. The ordeal is supposed to detect and punish secret crime, which they apprehend abounds amongst them. No death was considered natural except through extreme old age, so that in the case of sickness or death it was supposed that some one or other was practising witchcraft or wizardry against the life of the sufferer. This dreaded power is called *ifot*, and there is an internal organ always found in the leopard, it is said, bearing this name, which, when an individual is possessed, gives the power of causing sickness or death at his pleasure. On a death occurring, the juju [that is, fetish] man might be asked to discover the guilty party, which he was never at a loss to do, and those he denounced were subjected to the ordeal of the poison bean, the *Physostigma venenosum* of botanists, which has found a place in *Materia Medica*. It is administered in every way in which poison is given, and is held to be a test of the possession or non-possession of the *ifot*. When the accused vomits the poison draught, *ifot* is not found in the individual, and he is consequently innocent of the crime with which he is charged ; but if his stomach does not reject it, he dies, which is conclusive proof of his guilt. The ordeal is readily undergone and even appealed to, all having firm faith that the result will be according to truth, and all of course assume that they are not possessed of the dreaded power. By their faith in this superstition many destroy themselves."[2]

Devastating effects of the indiscriminate appeal to the ordeal.

"The means of destruction which this superstition puts into the

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Ninth Edition, iv. (Edinburgh, 1876) p. 650. Compare Professor Christison, in *Monthly Journal of Medicine*, March, 1855, quoted by Thomas J. Hutchinson, *Impressions of Western Africa* (London, 1858), pp. 151 *sq.* ; Ém. Perrot et Ém. Vogt, *Poisons de Flèches et Poisons d'Épreuve* (Paris, 1913), pp. 52 *sqq.*

[2] Hugh Goldie, *Calabar and its Mission*, New Edition (Edinburgh and London, 1901), pp. 34 *sq.*

hands of the people, and which are so extensively used, prevents the growth of population, and everything else beneficial. Dr. Hewan, whose medical services the mission formerly enjoyed, in visiting the Qua country behind Old Town, where he then resided, came upon the ruins of a large village. On inquiring the cause of this, he was informed that the headmen mutually accused each other of *ifot*, and in an appeal to the ordeal a number of them died. The people, from dread of the ghosts of those thus self-destroyed, deserted the place. Uwet, a small tribe from the hill-country, had settled on the left branch of the river, where it narrows into a rivulet. When we first visited the place, a considerable population, divided into three villages, occupied the settlement. Since that time it has almost swept itself off the face of the earth by the constant use of *esere*. At one time two headmen contended for the kingship. He who succeeded in gaining it fell sick, and of course accused his opponent of seeking to destroy him, and insisted that his competitors and adherents should test their innocence by this ordeal. A number died, and the sickness of the successful candidate also issued in death. The one disappointed now attained the coveted honour, and in retaliation subjected those of the opposite party to the test, and a number more perished. On one occasion the whole population took the *esere*, to prove themselves pure, as they said; about half were thus self-destroyed, and the remnant, still continuing their superstitious practice, must soon become extinct." [1]

The effects of the poison on the human body.

The action of the poison on the human frame was lucidly explained by a native gentleman of Calabar, while to illustrate his remarks he imitated the writhings of the sufferer with a life-like fidelity which left nothing to the imagination. "Him do dis," said he, "soap come out of him mout, and all him body walk," which is said to be a perfect description of the ebullition of foam from the mouth and the convulsive twitchings of the whole man. The Englishman, to whom this information was imparted, tells us that according to some people the poison of the nut could be extracted by boiling it in water, and that accordingly accused persons who were rich enough to bribe the

[1] Hugh Goldie, *Calabar and its Mission*, New Edition, pp. 37 *sq.*

medicine-man generally passed through the ordeal without suffering much inconvenience.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Kagoro of Northern Nigeria.

Among the Kagoro, a war-like tribe of Northern Nigeria, the poison ordeal is also in vogue. The poison is extracted from the pith of a tree, which is pounded and soaked in water. Having drunk the poisoned draught, the accused has to walk round the empty calabash; if he vomits, he is as usual deemed innocent, but if he fails to eject the poison, he dies the same day. A powerful man can submit to the ordeal by deputy in the shape of a fowl, which drinks the poison for him. It is said that not many years ago the chief of Ungual Kaura, accused of the murder of his wife, demonstrated his innocence in this manner to the entire satisfaction of his fellow townsmen. However, the testimony of the fowl was not accepted as conclusive evidence by the English magistrate who tried the case; he obstinately preferred to rely on the depositions of witnesses who had seen the ruffian beat in the woman's head with a stool.[2]

General account of the poison ordeal in Upper Guinea.

Before we trace the poison ordeal farther southward, it may be well to quote here a general account of it which applies to the whole of Upper Guinea, from the Ivory Coast to the delta of the Niger. The account was written by a missionary who spent eighteen years in the country at a time when as yet European civilization placed few or no checks on the excesses of African superstition, and it mentions some particulars which are not noticed in the preceding descriptions.

The red water.

"Terrible as witchcraft is," says the writer, "there is a complete remedy for it in the 'red-water ordeal.' This, when properly administered, has the power not only to wipe

[1] Thomas J. Hutchinson, *Impressions of Western Africa*, pp. 152 *sq.* As to the poison ordeal in Southern Nigeria, see further William Allen and T. R. H. Thomson, *Narrative of the Expedition sent by Her Majesty's Government to the Niger in 1841* (London, 1848), i. 119 (ordeal by "sassy water"); Mary H. Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* (London, 1897), p. 464; A. F. Mockler-Ferryman, *British Nigeria* (London, 1902), pp. 237 *sq.*; A. G. Leonard, *The Lower Niger and its Tribes* (London, 1906), p. 480; P. Amaury Talbot, *In the Shadow of the Bush* (London, 1912), pp. 165 *sqq.*; Ém. Perrot et Ém. Vogt, *Poisons de Flèches et Poisons d'Épreuve* (Paris, 1913), p. 53.

[2] A. J. N. Tremearne, *The Tailed Head-hunters of Nigeria* (London, 1912), pp. 200 *sq.* The tree from which the poison is procured for the ordeal is most probably the *Erythrophleum guineense*, since that tree, as I learn from Dr. O. Stapf of Kew, is a native of Northern Nigeria.

off the foulest stain from injured innocence, but can detect and punish all those who are guilty of practising this wicked and hateful art. And from the results of this ordeal there is and can be no appeal. Public opinion has long since acknowledged its perfect infallibility, and no man ever thinks of gainsaying or questioning the correctness of its decisions. The 'red-water' is a decoction made from the inner bark of a large forest tree of the *mimosa* family. The bark is pounded in a wooden mortar and steeped in fresh water, until its strength is pretty well extracted. It is of a reddish colour, has an astringent taste, and in appearance is not unlike the water of an ordinary tan vat. A careful analysis of its properties shows that it is both an astringent and a narcotic, and, when taken in large quantity, is also an emetic.

The procedure at the ordeal.

"A good deal of ceremony is used in connection with the administration of the ordeal. The people who assemble to see it administered form themselves into a circle, and the pots containing the liquid are placed in the centre of the inclosed space. The accused then comes forward, having the scantiest apparel, but with a cord of palm-leaves bound round his waist, and seats himself in the centre of the circle. After his accusation is announced, he makes a formal acknowledgment of all the evil deeds of his past life, then invokes the name of God three times, and imprecates his wrath in case he is guilty of the particular crime laid to his charge. He then steps forward and drinks freely of the 'red-water.' If it nauseates and causes him to vomit freely, he suffers no serious injury, and is at once pronounced innocent. If, on the other hand, it causes vertigo and he loses his self-control, it is regarded as evidence of guilt, and then all sorts of indignities and cruelties are practised upon him. A general howl of indignation rises from the surrounding spectators. Children and others are encouraged to hoot at him, pelt him with stones, spit upon him, and in many instances he is seized by the heels and dragged through the bushes and over rocky places until his body is shamefully lacerated and life becomes extinct. Even his own kindred are required to take part in these cruel indignities, and no outward manifestation of grief is allowed in behalf of a man who has been guilty of so odious a crime. . . .

Intelligence ascribed to the red water.

"The people entertain singular notions about the nature and power of this ordeal, and sometimes use it in other cases than those where a man is accused of witchcraft. They are not fond of examining witnesses, or scrutinizing the evidences that may be adduced in ordinary cases of litigation. They suppose that the 'red-water' itself possesses intelligence, and is capable of the clearest discrimination in all these doubtful cases. They suppose that when taken into the stomach, it lays hold of the element of witchcraft and at once destroys the life of the man. This power, or instrument of witchcraft, they suppose to be a material substance; and I have known native priests, after a *post-mortem* examination, to bring forth a portion of the *aorta*, or some other internal organ which the people would not be likely to recognize as belonging to the body, as proof that they had secured the veritable witch."[1]

The poison ordeal among the natives of the Cross River in the Cameroons.

The negroes of the Cross River, in the Cameroons, believe that a sorcerer has in his body, near his heart, an evil spirit in the shape of an owl, which can quit his body at night and suck the blood of men or women, thus causing their death. When a man is accused of keeping such a foul fiend in his body, he is compelled to submit to the poison ordeal in the presence of the whole village. The poison is prepared from the Calabar bean, which grows wild in the district. First, the accused receives from the priest one of the beans, and must swallow it whole. Next he is handed a calabash of water, in which ten of the poisonous beans have been steeping for an hour. If within three hours of drinking the draught he vomits up both the bean and the water, he is declared innocent; in the interval he sits before the house under strict guard. Sometimes the poison proves fatal in two hours. The German writer, who reports the custom, was accidentally let into the secret of a mode of working the oracle which allows the accused to escape with his life and without a stain on his character. One day he met in the street his interpreter, dressed as a woman, with strings of beads about his neck, body, and arms, and rings round his ankles. On inquiring into the reasons for this singular attire, he learned that the man had that morning

[1] Rev. J. Leighton Wilson, *Western Africa* (London, 1856), pp. 224-228.

voluntarily undergone the poison ordeal in order to clear himself from the imputation of having the spirit of witchcraft in his body. This foul accusation he had successfully rebutted by vomiting the poison; and in compliance with established custom he was thereafter obliged to dress himself as a woman and to exhibit himself in that guise up and down the village. Further inquiries elicited the method by which the supposed culprit had been enabled thus to acquire the fame and assume the garb of injured innocence. The night before the ordeal he had taken the precaution of cracking the beans, boiling them in water, and pouring off the poisonous decoction; so that next morning the faint flavour of poison which remained in the beans only sufficed to furnish a decent emetic. The discovery seemed to prove that the medicine-man always had it in his power to kill or save the accused by employing boiled or unboiled beans in the ordeal; and accordingly the German authorities henceforth forbade this travesty of justice under pain of a long term of imprisonment.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Bayas of the French Congo.

The Bayas, who inhabit the right bank of the Kadeï river in French Congo, on the borders of the Cameroons, cannot understand how any but old people can die from natural causes. All other deaths they imagine to be due to spells cast on the deceased persons by women. Accordingly when a man in the prime of life has died, all his womenkind, and especially his wives, are assembled and obliged to submit to the poison ordeal. The poison consists of an infusion of a certain bark called *banda* in water. As usual, innocence is demonstrated by vomiting up the poison, and guilt is proved by dying of it. The body of the culprit is opened by the medicine-man, and the source of the witch's magical power is supposed to be found within it in the form of a bird.[2]

[1] Alfred Mansfeld, *Urwald-Dokumente, Vier Jahre unter den Crossflussnegern Kameruns* (Berlin, 1908), pp. 178 *sq.* On the use of the poison ordeal, in cases of sorcery, among the negroes of the Cameroons, see also Bernhard Schwarz, *Kamerun, Reise in die Hinterlande der Kolonie* (Leipsic, 1886), p. 175. According to this latter writer, when the accused did not succeed in proving his innocence by vomiting the poison, he was at once cut down.

[2] A. Poupon, "Étude ethnographique des Baya de la circonscription du M'Bimou," *L'Anthropologie*, xxvi. (Paris, 1915) pp. 113, 130, 133.

The poison ordeal among the Fans of the Gaboon.

The poison ordeal also obtains, or used to obtain, among the Fans of the Gaboon.[1] The poison used for this purpose is obtained sometimes from the bark of the *Erythrophleum micranthum* tree, which the natives call *elun*, sometimes from the bark and roots of a shrub which the natives call *oné* or *onai*, and which is said to be a species of *Strychnos*, and sometimes finally from the roots of another shrub, which the natives call *kwea*, and which is reported to be another species of *Strychnos* (*Strychnos ikaja*).[2] The latter shrub, the name of which is also given as *nkazya* or *ikaja*, is said to be a small shrub, not unlike a hazel bush, with a red root.[3] Another native name for the plant from which the poison is extracted is *mboundou*.[4] Probably the name applied to the plant varies in different parts of the country. As usual the ordeal is resorted to for the purpose of detecting a witch or wizard, whose baneful spells are supposed to have caused sickness or death. The effect of the poison brewed from the red roots of the plant is said to be even more powerful than that produced by the red bark of the *Erythrophleum guineense*. "A person

[1] The name of these people is variously spelt Fan, Fang, Pahouin, M'Pongos, Mpongwes, and Pangwes. I have chosen the simplest form.

[2] H. Trilles, *Le Totémisme chez les Fân* (Münster i. W., 1912), p. 563; G. Tessmann, *Die Pangwè* (Berlin, 1913), ii. 241 *sq.* The latter writer mentions only the *elun*, which he identifies with the *Erythrophleum guineense*. But the tree is rather the *Erythrophleum micranthum*, which occurs in the Gaboon, while the *Erythrophleum guineense* apparently does not, as I learn from Sir David Prain and Dr. O. Stapf. See above, p. 309. As to the shrub from which one of the poisons (*mboundou*) is procured in this region, see Ém. Perrot et Ém. Vogt, *Poisons de Flèches et Poisons d'Épreuve* (Paris, 1913), pp. 81 *sqq.*

[3] Rev. J. Leighton Wilson, *Western Africa* (London, 1856), p. 225 note *; (Sir) Richard F. Burton, *Two Trips to Gorilla Land* (London, 1876), i. 103. As Sir David Prain has pointed out to me, the word *ikaja* is no doubt only a different spelling, or represents a slightly different pronunciation, of the native word which is variously rendered as *nkazya*, *nkassa*, *nikesi*, *kassa*, etc. See pp. 351, 352 *sq.*, 354. With regard to the identification of the plant or plants from which *nkassa* is obtained, Sir David Prain writes to me, "It is manifest from your account that *ncassa* is not always the same plant. But there is this difference between *Erythrophleum* and *Strychnos* in Africa, that whereas you have only three species of *Erythrophleum*, you have some four score species of *Strychnos*. When you are dealing with *ncassa* you may be pretty certain from the locality whether it is *E. guineense* or *E. micranthum* that is your plant. When you are dealing with *mboundou* it is equally clear, to my mind, that you are not always face to face with the same plant. But what the species, in a given instance, may be, I should not like to have to say, and I am sure you have done wisely in merely indicating it as *a Strychnos*."

[4] Paul B. du Chaillu, *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa* (London, 1861), pp. 256 *sq.*; *id.*, *A Journey to Ashango-Land* (London, 1867), p. 175; (Sir) Richard F. Burton, *Two Trips to Gorilla Land*, i. 103 *sq.*

is seldom required to drink more than half a pint of the decoction. If it acts freely as a diuretic it is a mark of innocence; but if as a narcotic, and produces dizziness or vertigo, it is a sure sign of guilt. Small sticks are laid down at the distance of eighteen inches or two feet apart, and the suspected person, after he has swallowed the draught, is required to walk over them. If he has no vertigo, he steps over them easily and naturally; but, on the other hand, if his brain is affected, he imagines they rise up before him like great logs, and in his awkward effort to step over them, he is very apt to reel and fall to the ground. In some cases this draught is taken by proxy; and if a man is found guilty, he is either put to death or heavily fined and banished from the country. In many cases *post-mortem* examinations are made with the view of finding the actual witch. I have known the mouth of the *aorta* to be cut out of a corpse and shown as unanswerable proof that the man had the actual power of witchcraft. No one can resent the death of one under such circumstances. He is supposed to have been killed by the awkward management of an instrument that was intended for the destruction of others, and it is rather a cause of congratulation to the living that he is caught in a snare of his own devising."[1]

Du Chaillu on the poison ordeal among the Camma, Commi, or Gommi tribe of the Gaboon.

When Du Chaillu was staying at Goumbi, a town of the Camma, Commi, or Gommi tribe in the Gaboon, he witnessed the employment of the poison ordeal for the detection of witchcraft. The tribe was then ruled by a king named Quengueza, a brave hunter and warrior and a man of unusual intelligence, but much afraid of witchcraft. About this time a suspicion had apparently got abroad that some one was trying to bewitch the king. What followed may best be described in Du Chaillu's own words.' "The next morning I heard a great commotion on the plantation, and learned that an old doctor, named Olanga-Condo, was to drink the *mboundou*. This is an intoxicating poison, which is believed by these people to confer on the drinker—if it do not kill him—the power of divination. It is much used in all this part of the country to try persons accused of witchcraft. A poor

Power of divination supposed to be conferred by the poison.

[1] Rev. J. Leighton Wilson, *Western Africa*, pp. 398 *sq.*

fellow is supposed to have bewitched his neighbour, or the king, and he is forced to drink *mboundou* to establish his innocence. If the man dies he is declared a witch. If he survives he is innocent. This ordeal is much dreaded by the negroes, who often run away from home and stay away all their lives rather than submit to it. The doctors have the reputation of being unharmed by the *mboundou*; and I am bound to admit that Olanga drank it without serious consequences. Nevertheless, it is a deadly and speedy poison. I have seen it administered, and have seen the poor drinker fall down dead, with blood gushing from his mouth, eyes, and nose in five minutes after taking the dose. I was told by a native friend that sometimes, when the *mboundou*-drinker is really hated, the dose is strengthened secretly; and this was the case, I suppose, in those instances where I saw it prove fatal. I have also been assured by negroes that sometimes the veins of the person who drinks it burst open. This time I overlooked the whole operation. Several of the natives took the root and scraped it into a bowl. To this a pint of water was poured. In about a minute fermentation took place: the ebullition looked very much like that of champagne when poured into a glass. The water then took the reddish colour of the cuticle of the *mboundou* root. When the fermentation subsided, Olanga was called by his friends. The drinker is not permitted to be present at the preparation of the *mboundou*, but he may send two friends to see that all is fair.

The diviner under the influence of the poison.

"When Olanga came he emptied the bowl at a draught. In about five minutes the poison took effect. He began to stagger about. His eyes became bloodshot. His limbs twitched convulsively. His speech grew thick;[1] and other important symptoms showed themselves, which are considered as a sign that the poison will not be fatal. The man's whole behaviour was that of a drunken man. He began to babble wildly; and now it was supposed that the inspiration was upon him. Immediately they began to ask him whether

[1] "A frequent and involuntary discharge of the urine is the surest indication that the *mboundou* will have no fatal effect, as it proved with Olanga, otherwise it is generally followed by death. The very words employed by the men when any one drinks the poison seem to imply what are its usual consequences."

any man was trying to bewitch Quengueza. This question was repeated several times. At last he said, 'Yes, some one was trying to bewitch the king.' Then came the query, 'Who?' But by this time the poor fellow was fortunately hopelessly tipsy, and incapable of reasonable speech. He babbled some unintelligible jargon, and presently the palaver was declared over. While he was being questioned, about one hundred people sat around with sticks in their hands. These they beat regularly upon the ground, and sung in a monotone,

'*If he is a witch, let the* mboundou *kill him.*
If he is not, let the mboundou *go out.*'

The whole ceremony lasted about half an hour; and when it was over the people dispersed, and Olanga, who had by that time partially recovered, lay down to sleep. I was told that this old Olanga could drink the poison in very considerable quantities and at frequent intervals, with no other ill effect than this intoxication. This gave him, of course, a great name among these superstitious people."[1]

Personification of the poison.

This use of the poison as a mode of inspiration is remarkable, and is the first instance of the kind we have met with in Africa. In the case described the poison was administered, not to the supposed witch, but to the medicine-man who was engaged to detect the witch. But whether employed in the one way or the other, the efficacy of the drug is probably thought to be derived from its personal character; the poison is believed to be endowed with superhuman knowledge, which enables it either to detect and punish the crime in the stomach of the criminal, or to reveal his name to the medicine-man, who will bring the miscreant to justice.

Du Chaillu on the poison ordeal among the Otandos of the Gaboon.

On another occasion, when he was staying among the

[1] Paul B. du Chaillu, *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa* (London, 1861), pp. 256-259. The writer submitted some of the leaves and root of the *mboundou* to Professor John Torrey, of New York, for chemical analysis. The professor wrote in reply that "the *mboundou* pretty certainly belongs to a natural order that contains many venomous plants, viz. the LOGANIACEAE; and, from the peculiar veining of the leaves, it is probably a species of *Strychnos* belonging to that section of the genus which includes *S. nox vomica*" (*op. cit.* p. 257, note *). This identification of the plant in question as a species of *Strychnos* is confirmed by Dr. O. Stapf of Kew.

Otandos, a tribe of the Gaboon, Du Chaillu saw the poison drunk both by the suspected wizards and by the medicine-man whose office it was to expose them. It happened that the king, whose name was Mayolo, had been ailing for some time, and while he was in this state his favourite wife and one of his nephews fell sick of smallpox. Such an accumulation of ailments, in the king's opinion, could be due to no other cause than the nefarious arts of some sorcerer, who was bewitching him and his family and seeking to cause their deaths. To detect the villain or villains a celebrated witch-doctor was fetched from a distance, and on his appearance he declared, after going through a certain amount of hocus-pocus, that the wizards who were doing all the mischief were resident in the village. The announcement struck consternation into the inhabitants: they all began to look askance at each other: even the nearest relatives were tormented by mutual suspicions. The king thereupon stood up and exclaimed excitedly that his subjects must drink the poison; and he appointed the following morning for the ceremony, because the people had already eaten food that day, and the poison must be drunk on an empty stomach. Accordingly next morning at sunrise the village was empty. All the inhabitants had gone to a little meadow, encircled by woods, where the ordeal was to take place. When the traveller entered the assembly, he found that the suspicions of the people had fallen on three of the king's nephews, who as his heirs were charged with a design of anticipating the scythe of time and mowing down their royal uncle by magic art. It was in vain that they protested their innocence and stigmatized their accusers as liars. There was no help for it, but they must drink the poison. So putting the best face they could on a bad business, they declared that they were not afraid to drink it, for they were no wizards and would not die. Some people, accompanied by relatives of the accused, thereupon retired to a little distance to brew the poison. Roots of the shrub were produced and scraped into a bowl; water was next poured upon the scrapings; it fizzed and reddened, which showed that it was fit to kill any witch or wizard. All was now ready. The three accused men were brought forward, and round them gathered an

The accusation.

The brewing of the poison.

excited crowd of spectators, armed with knives, axes, and spears with which they were prepared and eager to cut and hack the supposed wizards to pieces, if they should succumb under the ordeal. With all eyes intently fixed on them, they drained the poisoned cups boldly amid a breathless silence; even the whispering of the wind, we are told, could be heard among the leaves of the forest, while the lives of three human beings hung in the balance. But the silence did not last long. Hardly was the poison swallowed when the crowd began to beat the ground with their sticks, shouting, "If they were wizards, let the *mboundou* kill them; if innocent, let it go out!" These words they continued to repeat so long as the suspense endured. The struggle was severe; the eyes of the three men were bloodshot, their limbs trembled convulsively, every muscle in their bodies seemed to be twitching. And the acuter their sufferings, the louder roared the mob, as if thirsting for their blood. At last the crisis came; there was a sudden shiver, an involuntary discharge, and the first of the intended victims was saved. The same thing soon happened to the second and the third. All three gradually came to themselves, but in a state apparently of great exhaustion. The trial was now over. To close the proceedings the witch-doctor himself drank an enormous quantity of the poison, and discharged it in the same way as the accused had done before him. But under the influence of the drug he appeared quite tipsy, and among his wild incoherent utterances he declared that the sorcerers who had bewitched the king and brought sickness on the people did not belong to the village. This verdict of acquittal was greeted with a shout of acclamation. The king was greatly relieved to learn that the wicked witches and wizards, who compassed his death, were not his own subjects. The people went wild with joy; guns were fired, and the day, which had threatened to close so tragically, ended happily with the beating of drums, and singing, and dancing.[1]

The drinking of the poison.

The acquittal.

Among some of the Fan tribes a man who has drunk the poison has to walk along a pole stretched like a bridge

The test of walking on a pole.

[1] Paul B. du Chaillu, *Journey to Ashango-Land* (London, 1867), pp. 172-177.

across a brook or simply laid on the dry ground. Should he stumble and fall, the spectators rush on him, kill him with clubs, and eat him on the spot, if he is an ordinary criminal; but if he is a wizard, they burn him alive. Even such as succeed in walking along the pole or tree without stumbling are obliged to pay a heavy fine, on the principle that there is no smoke without fire, or, as the natives put it, no rat's hole without a rat.[1] It is said that among the Fans women are never subjected to the ordeal of drinking poison; though when they are accused of witchcraft, they are compelled to undergo an ordeal of a different kind by having the juice of a certain euphorbia dropped into one of their eyes. If the eye takes no harm, the accused is innocent; but if it bursts, as generally happens, the woman is declared guilty and hurried away into the forest, where she is burnt and eaten. The charge is said to be frequent and the punishment to follow immediately on conviction.[2]

The test of dropping poison in the eye.

Nowhere, perhaps, in Africa has this barbarous method of detecting an imaginary crime been applied more extensively or with greater rigour than among the tribes which inhabit the vast valley of the Congo River and its tributaries. Towards the end of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth century an English seaman, a native of Leigh, in Essex, spent eighteen years in Portuguese West Africa, and he has described the poison ordeal as it was practised in Loango, the province which is bounded on the south by the lower course of the Congo:—

The poison ordeal in the valley of the Congo.

"When any man is suspected for an offence, he is carried

Andrew Battel on the poison ordeal in Loango.

[1] H. Trilles, *Le Totémisme chez les Fân* (Münster i. W., 1912), p. 564. According to this writer, the poison of the *elun* (*Erythrophleum micranthum*) is ejected by making water, and the poison of the *ikaja* plant (a species of *Strychnos*) by vomiting. This is just the reverse of what is stated by all the other authorities whom I have consulted, and is probably incorrect. Compare the same writer's article, "Mille lieues dans l'inconnu; à travers le pays Fang," *Les Missions Catholiques*, xxxv. (1903) pp. 472 *sq.*

[2] H. Trilles, *Le Totémisme chez les Fân*, p. 565. It is not clear how a witch can be both burnt and eaten. Perhaps we are to understand that she is roasted first and eaten afterwards. The ordeal which consists in dropping a corrosive liquid into the eyes of the accused is common in Africa For some examples of it, see below, pp. 355, 360. The poison ordeal among the M'Pongos (Fans) of the Gaboon is briefly mentioned by H. Hecquard, *Reise an die Küste und in das Innere von West-Afrika* (Leipsic, 1854), p. 8. The account of the ordeal given by the German writer G. Tessmann in his elaborate monograph on the Fans (*Die Pangwe*, Leipsic, 1913, ii. 241 *sq.*) adds nothing of value to the accounts of previous writers.

before the king, or before Mani Bomma, who is a judge under the king. And if he denies matters, not to be proved except by their oath, then this suspected person swears thus: They have a kind of root which they call *Imbando*; this root is very strong, and is scraped into water. The virtue of this root is, that if they put too much into the water, the person that drinketh it cannot avoid[1] urine: and so it strikes up into the brain, as if he was drunk, and he falls down as if he was dead. And those that fall are counted guilty, and are punished. In this country none on any account dieth, but they kill another for him: for they believe they die not their own natural death, but that some other hath bewitched them to death. And all those are brought in by the friends of the dead whom they suspect; so that there many times come five hundred men and women to take the drink, made of the foresaid root *Imbando*. They are brought all to the high-street or market-place, and there the master of the *Imbando* sits with his water, and gives every one a cup of water by one measure; and they are commanded to walk in a certain place till they make water, and then they are free. But he that cannot urine presently falls down, and all the people, great and small, fall upon him with their knives, and beat and cut him into pieces. But I think the witch that gives the water is partial, and gives to him whose death is desired the strongest water, but no man of the bye-standers can perceive it. This is done in the town of Longo, almost every week throughout the year."[2]

Dapper on the poison ordeal in Loango.

Fuller particulars as to the mode in which the ordeal was administered in Loango are furnished by the Dutch geographer Dapper, who in the second half of the seventeenth century composed a general description of Africa, which is based on good authorities. According to him, an accused person who desired to attest his innocence in a formal manner was obliged to drink a cup of *bondes*, which were scrapings of a reddish root mixed

[1] That is, void, discharge.

[2] "The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battel," in John Pinkerton's *General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London, 1808–1814), xvi. 334. The root called *Imbando* is probably the same as the *mboundou* of the Gaboon and the *banda* of the French Congo. See above, pp. 341, 342, 343 *sqq.* The town of Longo is no doubt Loango, the capital of the province of that name. It was situated fifteen leagues to the northward of Zaire on the Congo (Andrew Battel, *op. cit.* p. 319).

in water, over which the medicine-man had pronounced curses. For these poor blinded heathen, he tells us, imagine that no calamity befalls a man which is not caused by the fetishes or charms of his enemy. If anybody, for example, falls into the water and is drowned, they will say that he was bewitched. If he is devoured by a wolf or a leopard, they will affirm that the wolf or the leopard was his foe, who by his enchantments had transformed himself into a wild beast. If he tumbles from a tree, if his house is burnt down, if the rain lasts longer than usual, all these misfortunes have been brought about by the sorceries of some wicked man, and it is a mere waste of time to attempt to disabuse them of their folly: to do so is only to incur their ridicule and contempt. Nothing can set their doubts at rest but recourse to the ordeal. The accuser presents himself to the king and begs him to appoint a judge to conduct the ordeal of the *bondes*, on payment of the usual fee. The king's council usually nominates nine or ten judges, who take their seats in a semicircle on the highroad. The hour of the day is not earlier than three o'clock in the afternoon, because custom requires that the trial should take place in the open air, and in that torrid climate the heat of the sun at an earlier hour would be too oppressive. The accused and the accuser present themselves before the judges, both of them attended by all their relations and neighbours, because in order to detect the culprit it is customary to subject to the ordeal all the inhabitants of the quarter where the suspected person resides. While the accused persons are drinking the cup of *bondes*, the judges beat drums. When all have drunk and resumed their places, the judges throw small sticks at the accused and command them to fall down if they are guilty, but to make water if they are innocent. Next the judges take up these sticks, cut them in pieces, and scatter them before the accused, who stand up and walk to and fro upon the fragments. Any of the accused who succeeds in making water on the broken sticks is conducted home in triumph amid applause and cries of joy; but if any man among them stumble and fall, the horror and consternation of the crowd find vent in shrieks and shouts, which stun him and deprive him of the power of regaining his feet. His guilt is

The universal belief in witchcraft.

The administration of the ordeal.

now deemed manifest, and if his crime is a capital one, or he has many enemies, he is immediately led away to a place on the highroad about a mile from the town, where he is cut to pieces. If his offence is not a capital one, or if for any reason it is desired to save his life, he is given an antidote to annul the effect of the poison, but often, we are told, the antidote proves more fatal than the bane it is designed to counteract, and the man whom the poison had spared falls a victim to the remedy. Rich people do not care to incur the risk of the ordeal, and prefer to employ their slaves as proxies, who drink the poison for them. But if the proxy is convicted by falling down, the man whom he represents is bound to swallow the deadly draught in his own person. Another way of passing through the ordeal unscathed is to bribe the judges, and this may explain a circumstance, which otherwise might seem singular and unaccountable, that in these countries it is almost always the poor who are found guilty. Execution speedily follows conviction, and though the consent of the king is necessary to carrying it out, the crowd of both sexes and all ages anticipates the royal mandate by mauling and mangling the condemned, till death puts a period to his sufferings.[1]

Drinking the poison by proxy.

The credulous and uncritical Capuchin missionary, Jerom Merolla da Sorrento, who travelled in the kingdom of Congo in the latter part of the seventeenth century, has left us an account of the various sorts of ordeal which were in use among the natives at that time. As to the poison ordeal he tells us that "to discover who has been dealing with the devil, they make the following experiment: The root of a certain tree called *Ncassa* is dissolved in water; and, after dissolution, that water is put up in vessels, and given to the person accused to drink. Afterwards he is delivered into the hands of several strong men to misuse, and shake about in a manner, that in a very short time he falls down in a swoon; some imagine that this is rather occasioned by poison given him instead of the said root. This tree is pretty tall, and of a red colour, and has a wonderful virtue

Merolla on the poison ordeal in the kingdom of Congo.

[1] O. Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique* (Amsterdam, 1686), pp. 325 *sq.* The poison which Dapper calls *bondes* is probably the same with the *imbando* of Battel and the *mboundou* of Du Chaillu and Burton. See above, pp. 342, 343 *sqq.*, 349.

for curing the tooth-ache and sore gums. It is likewise extremely pernicious to birds, who fly from it; for if they should once settle on its boughs, they would immediately fall down dead to the ground."[1] "When any one dies under their hands, they affirm that there were other occasions of his death than those of his distemper, which puts the parents upon divers cursed methods of finding out the supposed murderers, they being generally of opinion that nobody dies a natural death."[2] "They have another sort of oath which they call *Orioncio*: the way of administering this is, by putting exceeding strong poison into the fruit called *Nicesi*, sufficiently spoken of before, and afterwards giving that fruit to the supposed guilty person to eat: he has no sooner tasted of it, but his tongue and throat begin to swell to that excess, that if the wizard did not speedily apply an antidote, he must inevitably soon perish under the experiment, and though innocent he commonly remains tortured for many days."[3] With regard to the *Nicesi* fruit, which was employed in this ordeal, the Capuchin informs us that when it is cut through the middle, or any way except in length, it shows a sort of sketch or rough draught of a crucifix with the figure of our Saviour easily discernible on the cross.[4]

Proyart on the poison ordeal in Loango and Congo.

The abbé Proyart, who composed a history of Loango, Congo, and the adjoining provinces in the latter part of the eighteenth century, has described the poison ordeal as follows: "When any one is accused of a crime of which they cannot convict him, they permit him to justify himself by drinking the *kassa*. The *kassa* is prepared by infusing in water a bit of wood so called. This potion is a true

[1] Jerom Merolla da Sorrento, "Voyage to Congo," in John Pinkerton's *General Collection of Voyages and Travels*, xvi. 222. As to the friar's testimony, Sir David Prain writes to me, "Your uncritical friend Jerom Merolla da Sorrento seems to be particularly confused, for his *Ncassa* comes from the 'root' of a plant, which should indicate that he had a *Strychnos*, not an *Erythrophleum*, in mind. Yet further on the statement that the tree is pretty tall and has a red bark suggests *Erythrophleum*, not *Strychnos*. But Brother Jerom is not the only one who has got confused over the names, I fear."

[2] Jerom Merolla da Sorrento, *op. cit.* p. 225.

[3] Jerom Merolla da Sorrento, *op. cit.* p. 226.

[4] Jerom Merolla da Sorrento, *op. cit.* p. 203. Dr. O. Stapf, of Kew, informs me that this description might fit *Strychnos*.

poison to weak stomachs, which have not the strength to throw it up immediately. He who stands the proof is declared innocent, and his accuser is condemned as a slanderer. If the fault of which the pretended culprit is accused does not deserve death, as soon as they perceive him just ready to expire they make him take an antidote, which excites vomiting, and brings him back to life; but they condemn him as a culprit to the penalty fixed by law. The inhabitants of the country have the greatest faith in this cordial. The princes and lords sometimes cause *kassa* to be taken in order to clear up their suspicions, but they must first obtain the king's permission to do so, which is not difficult when the suspicions are of weighty concern. About two years ago, a prince of the kingdom of Kakongo, who suspected that a design had been entertained of poisoning him, caused all the people of his household to take *kassa*; a great number of them died, and among others, a man of his officers whom he most loved, and who passed in the country for the honestest man in his service."[1]

The poison ordeal in the Congo State.

To this day trial by ordeal survives among the tribes of the Congo. The ordeals are various, but the most popular and widespread of all is the poison ordeal, which is reported to prevail throughout nearly the whole extent of the Congo State. Like the other ordeals, it is resorted to on a great variety of occasions, at judicial trials, funerals, religious assemblies, lunar incantations, and so forth, whenever justice or injustice demands the detection and punishment of a real or imaginary criminal. In this region, as in many other parts of Africa, sickness and death, public calamities and private misfortunes are regularly attributed to the machinations of sorcerers, and the assistance of the medicine-man or witch-doctor (*nganga*) is invoked to find a remedy for the evil or to bring the wrongdoer to justice. Sometimes the person whom the medicine-man denounces as the witch or wizard is put to death or otherwise punished without any

The belief in sorcery.

[1] Proyart, "History of Loango, Kakongo, and other kingdoms in Africa," in John Pinkerton's *General Collection of Voyages and Travels*, xvi. 582 *sq.* Proyart's work was published in French at Paris in 1776. For other notices of the poison ordeal, as it was practised in these regions during the eighteenth century, see J. B. Labat, *Relation de l'Éthiopie Occidentale* (Paris, 1732), i. 268 *sq.*; L. Degrandpré, *Voyage à la côte occidentale d'Afrique dans les années 1786 et 1787* (Paris, 1801), i. 52.

further formalities; but generally the accused, who energetically denies his guilt, is given an opportunity of clearing his character by drinking poison, and strong in the conviction of his innocence the suspected wizard submits to the ordeal. Throughout a considerable part of the Congo the poison employed for this purpose is called by the natives *nkassa*, whence among Europeans the ordeal goes by the name of *cassa* or *casca*. The potion is prepared and administered by the medicine-man in presence of a crowd who have assembled to witness the trial. If the accused dies on the spot, he is naturally regarded as guilty of the witchcraft laid to his charge; if he escapes with his life, his character as an honest man and no wizard is established. Should the supposed culprit be a man of property or conscious of guilt, he will often, in the interval between the accusation and the trial, seek out the medicine-man and induce him by convincing arguments, or a sufficient bribe, to mix the dose so that it shall not be mortal. The draught is generally prepared either from the root of a plant belonging to the genus *Strychnos*, or from the bark of a tree; but sometimes it is made from the juice of a euphorbia or a decoction of boiled ants. The root or bark is scraped into water, which is thereupon boiled; the strength or weakness of the dose naturally varies with the amount of poison infused into the water. In different parts of the Congo valley the poison employed in the ordeal goes by different names. Thus in the Lower Congo it is called *muavi*, among the Upotos it is named *bundi*, and among the Azandes it goes by the name of *dawa*. Among the Bangalas one poison known as *nka* or *mbonde* is prepared by scraping the red root of a shrub of the genus *Strychnos*; the powder thus produced is infused into cold water, and the potion is then drunk by the accused, who is supposed to die infallibly if he is guilty, but merely to suffer from indisposition if he is innocent. The first effect of the drug is to produce a state resembling intoxication. Some people accused of witchcraft offer voluntarily to drink the poison in order to demonstrate their innocence. Among the Bangalas there is another ordeal of the same sort known by the name of *mokungu*. The poison is a juice extracted from the bark of a tree called *mukungu*, which grows com-

Plants which supply the poison for the ordeal.

monly in the forests, and perhaps belongs to the family of acacias. This ordeal is generally reserved for women, who do not drink the juice, but are obliged to drop a little of it under the eyelid of one of their eyes. If the woman is guilty, the eye bursts; if she is innocent, she takes no harm. Slave women who have lost one eye in this way are not uncommon in Bangala villages. In some tribes the accused may procure a proxy in the person of a slave or a friend to drink the poison for him; a friend will readily perform this good office, confiding in the other's innocence and his own immunity. If the accused should fail to eject the poison, without dying from the effect of it, he is put to death with every refinement of cruelty and barbarity. In the country of the Azandes the ordeal assumes a milder form. The poison (*dawa*) is usually administered in the first instance to fowls in order to discover the criminal, who, on being detected, must undergo the ordeal in his own person or pay the forfeit. Among the Abarambos, for example, the poison is given by the chief to three fowls, and a ritual dance follows, until the effect of the drug upon the birds becomes apparent. If one only of the fowls succumbs, there has been no witchcraft; but if two or three perish, it is a clear case of sorcery.[1]

Poison dropped into the eye.

Proxies in the poison ordeal.

Fowls as proxies.

"The peoples of the Congo do not believe in a natural death, not even when it happens through drowning or any other accident. Whoever departs this life is the victim of witchcraft or a spell. His soul has been eaten. He must be avenged by the punishment of the person who has committed the crime." Accordingly, when a death has taken place, the medicine-man or witch-doctor (*ganga nkissi*) is sent for to discover the culprit. He pretends to be possessed by a spirit, and in that state of exaltation he names the wretch who has caused the death by sorcery. The accused must submit to the poison ordeal by drinking a decoction of the bark of the *Erythrophleum guineense*. If he vomits up the poison, he is innocent; but if he fails to do so, the crowd rushes on him and slaughters him with clubs and knives.

Other notices of the poison ordeal on the Congo.

[1] *Notes analytiques sur les collections ethnographiques du Musée du Congo*, I. *Les Arts, Religion* (Brussels, 1902–1906), pp. 188-193. Compare Ém. Perrot et Ém. Vogt, *Poisons de Flèches et Poisons d'Épreuve* (Paris, 1913), pp. 85 *sqq.*

The kinsfolk of the supposed culprit must, moreover, pay an indemnity to the family of his supposed victim.[1] To the same effect another writer on the region of the Congo tells us that "death, in the opinion of the natives, is never due to a natural cause. It is always the result either of a crime or of sorcery, and is followed by the poison ordeal, which has to be undergone by an innocent man whom the fetish-man accuses from selfish motives."[2]

The poison ordeal in Loango. The two poisons employed called *mboundou* (a species of *Strychnos*) and *nkassa* (*Erythrophleum guineense* or *micranthum*).

In Loango, the province immediately to the north of the lower reaches of the Congo, the poisons employed in the ordeal are of two sorts, but both vegetable. The one is *mboundou*, derived from a shrub of the genus *Strychnos*, with slender roots which vary in colour from pale to dark red. The plant grows in clumps, like dogwood, in the forests on the coast of Loango, and is said to occur commonly in the mountains. Farther north it is found in the Gaboon, the Cameroons, and the delta of the Niger. The poison is obtained by scraping the red root into water, which assumes a correspondingly red hue. In the stomach the effect of the drug is to cause a discharge of urine. This is the poison used for the purpose of the ordeal in Yumba and the neighbouring districts of Loango. In the other parts of the Loango coast and far southwards of the Congo the poison employed in judicial proceedings is the *nkassa*, the bark of the tree of the same name (*Erythrophleum guineense*, or perhaps rather *Erythrophleum micranthum*), which grows to a considerable height on damp ground in the thick forests. The boundary between the regions devoted to the ordeal by *mboundou* and the ordeal by *nkassa* respectively is said to be the Kuilu River, though the demarcation is not absolute.[3] Many superstitions attach to the poison-tree

Superstitions attaching to the poison tree.

[1] Father Campana, "Congo, Mission Catholique de Landana," *Les Missions Catholiques*, xxvii. (Lyons, 1895) pp. 102 *sq.* The district of Landana described by the writer of this article is situated on the coast of Portuguese West Africa, a little to the north of the Congo, but the account of the poison ordeal seems intended to apply to the Congo natives in general. As the *Erythrophleum* apparently does not grow in the valley of the Congo, except near the mouth of the river (see above, p. 309), if the wood of the tree is here employed for the poison ordeal, it must be imported for the purpose.

[2] Th. Masui, *Guide de la Section de l'État Indépendant du Congo à l'Exposition de Bruxelles-Tervueren en 1897* (Brussels, 1897), p. 82. The writer here refers specially to the tribes of the Stanley Pool district.

[3] E. Pechuël-Loesche, *Die Loango-Expedition*, iii. 2 (Stuttgart, 1907),

(*Erythrophleum guineense* or *Erythrophleum micranthum*) in the minds of the natives. They say that it bears neither blossoms nor fruit, that the air about it is poisonous, and that he who sleeps in its shade will never wake again. The poison resides in the bark, and its strength is believed to be greatest at the waxing of the moon, and the speed of its action to vary according to the time and place of the cutting of the bark, whether at morning, at noon, or at evening, whether on the western or the eastern side of the trunk. The medicine-men are reported to prepare themselves for procuring the bark by abstaining from rum and women for twenty-four hours: they approach the tree only in pairs, accoutred with all their fetishes: they wave lighted torches to purify the poisoned air, and in the act of detaching the bark from the trunk they protect their heads with cloths or masks. The bark so obtained is dried in the sun, pounded, and ground between two wooden plates into a powder which resembles coffee in appearance, but has a noisome smell. In preparing this powder the medicine-men are said to observe strange ceremonies and to wear cloths or masks on their faces. Three tablespoonfuls of the powder form a dose. If the accused vomits the whole up without delay, his innocence is taken to be proved. If the result of the first draught is doubtful, the ordeal is repeated and is reinforced by magical rites. The natives believe that in the person of a witch or wizard there lurks an evil principle, which the poison searches out and destroys, killing the culprit at the same time. If there is no such evil principle in a person, the poison does him no harm.[1] Should the accused

Mode of procuring the bark from the tree.

pp. 418-421. Compare R. E. Dennett, *Notes on the Folklore of the Fjort* (*French Congo*) (London, 1898), p. 112, "The bark named *Mbundu* is given to the man who owns to being a witch, but denies having killed the person in question. That of *Nkassa* is given to those who deny the charge of being witches altogether." This distinction in the use of *mbundu* and *nkassa* appears not to be borne out by our other authorities. The tree from which the *nkassa* poison is here procured is probably the *Erythrophleum micranthum* rather than the *Erythrophleum guineense*; for from information given me by Sir David Prain and Dr. O. Stapf, of Kew, I gather that *E. micranthum*, but not *E. guineense*, occurs in the forests of this region and indeed of the whole coast of Lower Guinea from the Bight of Biafra southward to the Congo.

[1] E. Pechuël-Loesche, *Die Loango-Expedition*, iii. 2. pp. 421-423. Compare Adolf Bastian, *Die deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Küste* (Jena, 1874), i. 204-207.

eject the poison by purging, he is deemed guilty, and is either cut to pieces by the crowd on the spot or dragged away into the forest and burned.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Bakongo of the Lower Congo.

Some further particulars as to the employment of the poison ordeal among the Bakongo, or natives of the Lower Congo, are furnished by an experienced missionary who laboured among the people for many years. The only poison which he mentions as employed for the purpose is the bark of the *nkassa* tree (probably *Erythrophleum micranthum*). He tells us that the poisonous powder obtained by pounding the bark of the tree is sometimes mixed with water, sometimes placed dry in the mouth of the accused and washed down with palm-wine. The tree is never cut for any purpose except to furnish bark for the ordeal. The medicine-man, who conducts the ordeal, is alone at liberty to strip the tree of its bark, and in doing so he must address the tree in a set form of words; for the natives believe that it is not the medicinal properties of the bark which affect the stomach of him who partakes of it, but that there is a spirit in the tree which reveals the guilt or innocence of the suspected witch or wizard. The words which the medicine-man speaks to the tree before he strikes his axe into it are these: "I wish to procure a portion of your bark; and if the person for whom I am cutting is really a witch, let my axe bend when I strike you; but if he is not, let my axe enter you, and the wind stop blowing." It often happens that the air is very still, not a leaf stirring, for several hours before a storm, and this solemn stillness is believed by the natives to be caused by somebody cutting the poison tree. Having procured the bark, the medicine-man, accompanied by a crowd, conducts the accused to the bare top of a hill, where they build a hut of palm-fronds. Twenty-seven heaps of the poisonous powder are placed on a stone and pushed towards the accused. With them, one after the other, the medicine-man feeds the accused, who must spread out his hands and refrain from touching anything. If he vomits up four doses successively, he has proved beyond all doubt that he is no witch. The people then lead him back to the town, singing songs in his praise,

Ceremony at procuring the bark for the ordeal from the tree.

Mode of administering the ordeal.

[1] A. Bastian, *Die deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Küste*, i. 206, 207; R. E. Dennett, *Notes on the Folklore of the Fjort* (London, 1898), p. 17.

and they dress him in fine clothes to testify their joy at his acquittal. He is also entitled to exact a heavy fine from his accuser. But if the accused man does not vomit, or if he vomits, and blood or green matter be detected in the vomit, or finally, if he discharges the poison by purging, he is known to be a witch. So they take him from the hut and kill him, and leave his body on the hill-top to be devoured by wild beasts, eagles, and crows. Even when an accused person has passed through the ordeal successfully by fulfilling all the tests ordinarily imposed on such occasions, yet if he is very unpopular, and the people are set on killing him, they will put him to other severe tests. While the poor wretch is still dazed by the poison which he has swallowed, the bystanders will take twigs of six different sorts of trees and throw them at him in quick succession, requiring him to name the tree from which each twig was plucked. If he names them rightly, they will ask him to name the various kinds of ants that are running about on the ground; and if he again answers correctly, he is called upon to name the butterflies and birds that flit by through the air. Should he fail in any one of these tests, he is pronounced a witch and pays the penalty with his life, for a witch is the most hateful thing in all Congoland.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Bangala or Boloki of the Upper Congo.

The same writer has given us an account of the poison ordeal as it is practised by the Bangalas or Boloki, a cannibal tribe of the Upper Congo. The poison which they use for this purpose is called by them *nka*, which is the equivalent of the term *nkassa* employed on the Lower Congo. It is procured from the outer reddish skin of the rootlets of a tree which grows on the Lulanga River, a tributary that flows into the Congo from the south some forty miles below the Monsembe district. When it has been scraped from the rootlet the drug is very fluffy and of a deep scarlet colour. Two medicine-men prepare equal quantities of it; for the poison must be drunk, or rather eaten, by both accuser and accused. Each of them chews his portion of the drug and then washes it down with sugar-cane wine. The effect of the poison on the person who has swallowed it resembles

[1] John H. Weeks, *Among the Primitive Bakongo* (London, 1914), pp. 262-264.

intoxication; it blurs the vision, distorting and enlarging all objects, makes the legs tremble, the head giddy, and causes a sensation of choking in the throat and chest. He who first succumbs to the virulence of the poison by falling down loses his case, and he who resists it for the longest time and remains upright wins his case. While the decision still hangs in suspense, the two parties are not allowed to sit down, nor to lean against anything, nor even to touch anything with their hands, and they are further tested by being required to step clean over plantain stalks without touching them with their feet. The use of this ordeal is not confined to cases of witchcraft; it may be employed in civil cases in which damages are claimed for loss of property. In any case the unsuccessful party to the suit has to pay heavy damages; for it appears that in this tribe the poison ordeal neither proves fatal of itself nor entails the execution of the defeated suitor. However, it is reserved for very complicated civil cases and for serious accusations of witchcraft. Other ordeals are employed for minor charges of witchcraft and various other offences.

Poison dropped into the eye.

For example, the juice from the bark of one of two trees, the *epomi* and the *mokungu*, is squeezed out and dropped into the eye of the accused; if the sight is destroyed, the man is guilty. The *epomi* juice is the more powerful of the two; it is used, like the *nka*, in cases of witchcraft and serious charges of theft and adultery. Whichever of the juices is employed, the accused may refuse to submit to the ordeal unless the accuser undergoes it also; hence the juices of these trees are rarely employed. But when a medicine-man charges a person with being a witch, the accused cannot demand that the medicine-man should support the accusation by himself abiding the ordeal. Sometimes when a person is very ill or has lost a relative by death, he may accuse the members of his family of having caused the illness or death by witchcraft.

Ordeal of drinking from a magical bell.

If they deny the charge, which they ordinarily do with equal justice and indignation, the accuser challenges them to drink water out of the magical bell of a medicine-man. Should any one refuse to accept the challenge, he or she is deemed guilty of witchcraft. But if all accept the proposal, a medicine-man, who operates with a magical or fetish bell, is called in, dips up water in his bell, and offers it to each of

the suspected persons to drink. It is firmly believed that he or she who has practised witchcraft will soon die from the effect of drinking water out of the magical bell, but that the innocent will suffer no harm thereby.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Ababua of the Upper Congo.

Among the Ababua, another tribe of the Upper Congo, deaths are regularly attributed to the magical arts of witches or wizards, who have cast a spell on the deceased or caused an evil spirit (*likundu*) to enter into his body. Hence when a chief dies, a medicine-man is called in to detect the criminal or criminals. All the wives of the dead man are obliged to undergo the ordeal by swallowing a poison extracted from the root of a plant. Those who fall down under the influence of the drug are killed and eaten. When an ordinary freeman or freewoman dies, the medicine-man accuses some one in the village of having caused the death, and the accused has to submit to the poison ordeal in the usual way. If he passes through it unscathed, his innocence is demonstrated, and he receives from the medicine-man a slave by way of compensation. When the accused has died or been killed, the corpse is often opened in order to detect the magical substance or evil spirit (*likundu*), by which the witch or wizard wrought his foul enchantments. The substance or spirit is commonly produced in the shape of a rounded body containing a dark liquid; it is probably the gall-bladder. Such judicial murders are frequent among the Ababua.[2]

Fowls as proxies in the ordeal. The poison ordeal among the Nyam-nyam.

Among the Nyam-nyam or Azandes, to the north of the Ababua, the poison ordeal appears to be practised only on fowls, which act as proxies for the human parties. An oily fluid, extracted from a red wood called *bengye*, is administered to a hen, which represents the suspected criminal or witch, and the innocence or guilt of the accused is determined according as the bird survives the ordeal or perishes under it. Omens of victory or defeat in war are drawn from the fate of fowls in like manner.[3]

The poison ordeal among the Mambuttus.

The Mambuttus, another tribe of the same region, are said to

[1] John H. Weeks, *Among Congo Cannibals* (London, 1913), pp. 186-191, 292.

[2] Joseph Halkin, *Quelques peuplades du district de l'Uelé*, i. *Introduction, les Ababua* (Liége, 1907), pp. 95 *sq.* As to the *likundu*, see further *Notes Analytiques sur les Collections Ethnographiques du Musée du Congo*, i. *Les Arts, Religion* (Brussels, 1902-1906), pp. 165 *sq.*

[3] Georg Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*, Third Edition (London, 1878), i. 297.

ascribe every accident and misfortune, however trivial or natural its cause, to the malice of an ill-wisher or sorcerer. Sickness, death, the ravages of a storm, the burning of a hut, are all indifferently traced to the same fatal agency. Accordingly the suspected sorcerer is compelled to submit to one of several ordeals according to the gravity of the charge. One of these ordeals is the drinking of an infusion of poisonous herbs. If the accused is innocent he will vomit up the poison; but if he is guilty he dies, and his expiring agonies are greeted with shouts of approval and delight.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Bambala.

Further, the poison ordeal is in vogue among the tribes who occupy the valleys of the great tributaries which flow into the Congo from the south. Thus among the Bambala, a Bantu tribe inhabiting the tract of country between the Inzia (Saie) and Kwilu Rivers, the ordeal is resorted to in cases of alleged witchcraft, parricide, or minor offences. In a dispute either party may propose to establish his case or prove his innocence by drinking poison (*putu*); but the test is most frequently applied when a person is accused of being possessed by an evil spirit (*moloki*) which has caused the death of somebody. Such accusations are usually brought against persons who are old and rich, or, for some reason, unpopular; men do not hesitate to denounce their nearest relatives. The poison is prepared from the bark of the *Erythrophleum guineense*, or more probably the *Erythrophleum micranthum*, which is imported for the purpose from the mouth of the Kwango River. The scraped bark is ground into a fine powder and mixed with a little water to form a thick paste. Five large pellets, about the size of an almond, are formed of the paste and administered to the accused, one after the other, while the bystanders call on the evil principle or evil spirit (*moloki*) to come forth. These invocations last some ten or fifteen minutes, the time usually required for the operation of the drug. The poison acts in one of three ways: it causes death, evacuation, or vomiting. Death is the usual result, and is accepted as a conclusive

[1] G. Casati, *Ten Years in Equatoria* (London and New York, 1891), i. 164. The poison ordeal, in its ordinary form, is also in use among the Wawira, another tribe of the upper valley of the Congo, to the west of the Albert Lake. See Franz Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika* (Berlin, 1894), p. 394.

proof of guilt. If the accused voids the poison by evacuation, he is still deemed guilty and must dig his own grave, in which, after eating a fowl and drinking himself drunk on palm-wine, he is buried alive to prevent the evil principle or evil spirit (*moloki*) from escaping with his last breath. A large fire is kept burning on the grave for two days, after which the body is exhumed and eaten. But if the accused succeeds in vomiting up the poison, his innocence is established; he is decorated with beads and carried about the village in great triumph for several days, and his accuser must give him a pig as damages for defamation of character. Only if the unsuccessful accuser happens to be a witch-doctor does he escape the necessity of paying this tribute to injured innocence.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Ba-Yaka, Ba-huana, and Bangongo.

Similar beliefs and practices in regard to the poison ordeal prevail among two neighbouring Bantu tribes, the Ba-Yaka and the Ba-huana.[2] They occur also among the Bangongo, a tribe which inhabits the angle between the Lubudi and Sankuru rivers, and belongs, like the Bambala, to the Bushongo, or, as it is called by Europeans, the Bakuba nation. In this tribe, when any one dies a natural death without any apparent cause, the death is set down to the maleficence of a demon acting through the agency of a person who is possessed, consciously or unconsciously, by the evil spirit. The brother of the deceased commonly accuses one of the villagers, generally an old man or old woman, of having in this way killed his departed relative; and a witch-doctor, who bears the title of *Miseke*, is summoned to administer the poison ordeal to the accused. The poison is extracted from a plant called *ephumi*, and is kept for the purpose of the ordeal in a miniature hut of straw, about two feet high, in the middle of the principal street. A cup of the poison being presented to the accused, he says, "If I have killed

[1] E. Torday and T. A. Joyce, "Notes on the Ethnography of the Ba-Mbala," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxv. (1905) pp. 416 *sq.*; E. Torday, *Camp and Tramp in African Wilds* (London, 1913), p. 97. As to the species of tree from which the poison is obtained, see above, p. 309, note.

[2] E. Torday and T. A. Joyce, "Notes on the Ethnography of the Ba-Yaka," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxvi. (1906) pp. 48 *sq.*; *iid.*, "Notes on the Ethnography of the Ba-huana," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxvi. (1906) p. 291.

So-and-so, if I have killed So-and-so, if I have killed So-and-so, may you kill me," smiting his hands together thrice, "but if I am innocent, prove it." He then runs towards the forest, pursued by all the villagers, the friends of the deceased crying, "You have killed So-and-so, and you will die," while his friends, on the contrary, encourage him by shouting, "Prove that you are innocent! Prove that you are innocent!" The witch-doctor (*Miseke*) runs by the side of the fugitive, striking him on the head with a child's bell, and saying continually, "*Ephumi, ephumi*, kill the *moloki*!" that is, "Poison, poison, kill the man possessed of the devil," for in this tribe it appears that the name *moloki* is applied, not so much to the demon himself, as to the person of whom he has taken possession. If the accused is seized with a fit of vomiting, he is considered innocent, and his accuser must pay him several thousands of cowries as damages. If he cannot rid himself of the poison by vomiting, he dies, and his guilt is thought to be fully demonstrated.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Bashilange.

Among the Bashilange, a tribe which borders on the Bakuba or Bushongo nation, when two persons have quarrelled and one of them refuses to accept the decision of a third whom they have chosen to arbitrate between them, the arbitrator may order the recalcitrant party to undergo an ordeal by drinking the infusion of a certain bark. The draught is prepared by a medicine-man in the presence of the arbitrator, but no drowned fly may float on the surface of the liquid, and no menstruous woman may ever have been in the house where the potion is compounded.[2]

The poison ordeal among the Baluba.

Another considerable tribe of the same region, the Baluba, also employ the poison ordeal as a test of guilt or innocence in alleged cases of sorcery, when a man is accused of having killed another by witchcraft. The trial is conducted by the medicine-man in full barbaric pomp, his head adorned with a tuft of blood-red feathers, his body painted with white ochre, his loins girt with many skins,

[1] E. Torday et T. A. Joyce, *Notes Ethnographiques sur les peuples communément appelés Bakuba ainsi que sur les peuplades apparentées. Les Bushongo* (Brussels, 1910), pp. 78 *sq.*

[2] "Mittheilungen aus Dr. Paul Pogge's Tagebüchern," *Mittheilungen der Afrikanischen Gesellschaft in Deutschland*, iv. (1883–1885) p. 258. The smoking of hemp is practised by some of the Bashilange as a judicial ordeal instead of the poison ordeal (*op. cit.* p. 257).

and his hands grasping three spears, a whisk made of an antelope's tail, an axe, and an executioner's knife. Having raised a little hillock of earth and covered it with leaves, he causes the accused to take his seat on it, then crushes and pounds the red bark of the poison tree, and throws the crushed pieces into a jar of boiling water. When the liquid is reddened sufficiently, it is decanted, and the accused must drink a full pint and a half of it, with as much warm water afterwards. The action of the poison is rapid. If the accused vomits it up, the accusation is false, and the accuser must fly for his life, since he is liable to be cut to pieces on the spot by the relatives of the man whom he has calumniated. Moreover, the accuser's family must give two slaves or their equivalent to the accused as compensation for the wrong that has been done him by the accusation. On the other hand, if the suspected sorcerer cannot vomit the poison, he sinks to the ground, and this is accepted as a clear proof of his guilt. At once the relatives of the deceased, whom he is supposed to have destroyed by his witcheries, fling themselves upon him, sever his head from his body, cut off his arms and legs, and throw the still palpitating limbs into a great brazier in order utterly to annihilate the witch. Often at such scenes there is present a cannibal, who purchases the mangled remains of the criminal and carries them off to furnish the materials for a banquet.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Balunda.

Similar beliefs have led to similar practices among the tribes of the Kasai river and its affluents, which flow into the Congo from the south. Among these tribes an important place is occupied by the Balunda, who down to recent times were ruled by a great potentate called the Matiamvo or Muata-Yamvo. A fatal influence, we are told, is exercised over these people by the soothsayers. Sickness, misfortune, and death are set down by them, not to natural causes, but to the machinations of an enemy, and to discover the culprit the services of a soothsayer are called in. This personage generally smears clay on his own brow, temples, corners of the mouth, and breast, to indicate that it is not he himself but the great spirit Hamba who now

[1] Sir Harry Johnston, *George Grenfell and the Congo* (London, 1908), ii. 661 *sq.*

speaks through him. After a long preliminary course of singing and rattling he may declare that the sickness or death has been caused by the magic of some person deceased. To appease the malignant ghost offerings or articles of food are brought to an appointed place, where the ghost fetches them away under cover of night. Sometimes, however, the diviner accuses a living person of having done the mischief, and then the accused has to prove his innocence, if he can, by drinking *m'bambu*, which is a decoction of the bitter bark of the *Erythrophleum*. As usual, the accused is innocent if he vomits up the poison, and guilty if he dies from the effect of it. The people fully believe that an innocent man can drink the stuff with impunity, and in the consciousness of their innocence they will offer to subject themselves to the ordeal.[1]

The poison ordeal in Angola.

Southward of the vast region of the Congo and its tributaries, the poison ordeal, with all its attendant superstitions and iniquities, is or was till lately rampant in Angola, where under Portuguese rule the tribes have been in contact with European civilization and the Christian religion for centuries. But "the intercourse which the natives have had with white men, does not seem to have much ameliorated their condition. A great number of persons are reported to lose their lives annually in different districts of Angola, by the cruel superstitions to which they are addicted, and the Portuguese authorities either know nothing of them, or are unable to prevent their occurrence. The natives are bound to secrecy by those who administer the ordeal, which generally causes the death of the victim. A person, when accused of witchcraft, will often travel from distant districts in order to assert her innocency and brave the test. They come to a river on the Cassange called Dua, drink the infusion of a poisonous tree, and perish unknown. A woman was accused by a brother-in-law of being the cause of his sickness while we were at Cassange. She offered to take the ordeal, as she had the idea that it

Livingstone on the poison ordeal in in Angola.

[1] H. Wissmann, L. Wolf, C. von François, H. Müller, *Im Innern Afrikas, die Erforschung des Kassai* (Leipsic, 1888), pp. 143 *sq.* As to the Matiamvo or Muata-Yamvo, see *id.*, p. 101; David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London, 1857), pp. 457 *sqq.*; Paul Pogge, *Im Reiche des Muata Jamwo* (Berlin, 1880), pp. 227 *sqq.*

would but prove her conscious innocence. Captain Neves refused his consent to her going, and thus saved her life, which would have been sacrificed, for the poison is very virulent. When a strong stomach rejects it, the accuser reiterates his charge; the dose is repeated, and the person dies. Hundreds perish thus every year in the valley of Cassange."[1]

Monteiro on the poison ordeal in Angola.

A writer who was intimately acquainted with Angola has given the following instructive account of the poison ordeal as it is, or used to be, observed in that country: "All these sources of slaves for shipment were but a fraction of the number supplied by their belief in witchcraft. Witchcraft is their principal, or only belief; every thing that happens has been brought about by it; all cases of drought, sickness, death, blight, accident, and even the most trivial circumstances are ascribed to the evil influence of witchery or fetish. A fetish man is consulted, and some poor unfortunate accused and either killed at once or sold into slavery, and, in most cases, all his family as well, and every scrap of their property confiscated and divided amongst the whole town; in other cases, however, a heavy fine is imposed, and inability to pay it also entails slavery; the option of trial by ordeal is sometimes afforded the accused, who often eagerly demand it, such is their firm belief in it.

The poison employed in the ordeal.

"This extremely curious and interesting ordeal is by poison, which is prepared from the thick, hard bark of a large tree, the *Erythrophlæum guineense*. . . . Dr. Brunton has examined the properties of this bark, and finds that it possesses a very remarkable action. The powder, when inhaled, causes violent sneezing; the aqueous extract, when injected under the skin of animals, causes vomiting, and has a remarkable effect upon the vagus nerve, which it first irritates and then paralyses. The irritation of this nerve

[1] David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London, 1857), p. 434. Compare E. Torday and T. A. Joyce, "Notes on the Ethnography of the Ba-Mbala," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxv. (1905) p. 400, "Throughout practically the whole of Angola, among the Mushi-Congo, Ba-Congo, Ba-Ngala, Binbunda, etc., the poison ordeal is employed as a means of discovering the malign influence which is supposed to be responsible for every natural death: the poison appears to be the same, and the guilt or innocence of the accused is decided in a similar way."

makes the heart beat slowly. . . . It is called *casca* by the natives. . . . *Casca* is prepared by the bark being ground on a stone to a fine powder, and mixed with about half a pint of cold water, a piece about two inches square being said to be a dose. It either acts as an emetic or as a purgative; should the former effect take place, the accused is declared innocent, if the latter, he is at once considered guilty, and either allowed to die of the poison, which is said to be quick in its action, or immediately attacked with sticks and clubs, his head cut off and his body burnt.

Effect of the poison.

"All the natives I inquired of agreed in their description of the effect produced on a person poisoned by this bark; his limbs are first affected, and he loses all power over them, falls to the ground, and dies quickly, without much apparent suffering. It is said to be in the power of the fetish man to prepare the *casca* mixture in such a manner as to determine which of the effects mentioned should be produced; in case of a dispute, both parties drink it, and according as he allows the mixture to settle, and gives one the clear liquid and the other the dregs, so does it produce vomiting in the former, and acts as a purgative in the latter case. I have very little doubt that as the fetish man is bribed or not, so he can and does prepare it. The Portuguese in Angola strictly prohibit the use of *casca*, and severely punish any natives concerned in a trial by this bark, but it is nevertheless practised in secret everywhere.

Mode of administering the ordeal.

"The occasion of the test is one of great excitement, and is accompanied by much cruelty. In some tribes the accused, after drinking the potion, has to stoop and pass under half-a-dozen low arches made by bending switches and sticking both ends into the ground; should he fall down in passing under any of the arches, that circumstance alone is sufficient to prove him guilty, without waiting for the purgative effect to be produced. Before the trial the accused is confined in a hut, closely guarded, and the night before it is surrounded by all the women and children of the neighbouring towns, dancing and singing to the horrid din of their drums and rattles. On the occasion of the ordeal the men are all armed with knives, matchets, and

sticks, and the moment the poor devil stumbles in going under one of the switches, he is instantly set upon by the howling multitude and beaten to death, and cut and hacked to pieces in a few minutes. I was at Mangue Grande on one occasion when a big dance was going on the night before a poor wretch was to take *casca*. I went to the town with some of the traders at that place, and we offered to ransom him, but to no purpose; nothing, they said, could save him from the trial. I learnt, however, that he passed it successfully, but I think I never heard such a hideous yelling as the four hundred or five hundred women and children were making round the hut, almost all with their faces and bodies painted red and white, dancing in a perfect cloud of dust, and the whole scene illuminated by blazing fires of dry grass under a starlit summer sky.

Accusations of witchcraft.

"The most insignificant and extraordinary circumstances are made the subject of accusations of witchcraft, and entail the usual penalties. I was at Ambrizette when three Cabinda women had been to the river with their pots for water; all three were filling them from the stream together, when the middle one was snapped up by an alligator, and instantly carried away under the surface of the water, and of course devoured. The relatives of the poor woman at once accused the other two of bewitching her, and causing the alligator to take her out of their midst! When I remonstrated with them, and attempted to show them the utter absurdity of the charge, their answer was, 'Why did not the alligator take one of the end ones then, and not the one in the middle?' and out of this idea it was impossible to move them, and the poor women were both to take *casca*. I never heard the result, but most likely one or both were either killed or passed into slavery." [1]

The poison ordeal among the Songos of Angola.

Among the Songos, in the interior of Angola, dis-

[1] Joachim John Monteiro, *Angola and the River Congo* (London, 1875), i. 60-66. With regard to the tree from which the poison is procured, the writer refers to Oliver, *Flora of Tropical Africa*, ii. 320, and to Brunton, in *Proceedings of the Royal Society*. As to the latter authority, see above, p. 308. From Dr. O. Stapf, of Kew, I gather that the tree in question is more likely to be the *Erythrophleum micranthum* than the *Erythrophleum guineense*, since the latter species appears not to extend so far south as Angola. Another species of *Erythrophleum*, namely, *E. pubistamineum*, occurs in Angola, but it is not known to be poisonous, though it may be so.

putes about property are referred to the Soba or chief of the town, but if the litigants refuse to accept his decision, they have recourse to the poison ordeal. In this tribe the poison is usually drunk, not by the suitors themselves, but by their children or their dogs, who act as proxies for their parents or owners respectively. The poison is administered weak, so that death seldom results from it. The person whose child or dog first vomits the dose wins his case; but if before that happens, one of the champions, whether child or dog, collapses under the influence of the drug, the party whom he or she represents is cast in the suit.[1]

Proxies in the ordeal.

General absence of the poison ordeal in South Africa.

Among the tribes which inhabit the western regions of Africa from Angola southward the practice of the poison ordeal has not, so far as I am aware, been recorded; among the Herero, the chief Bantu tribe of South-West Africa, it is definitely said to be unknown.[2] Indeed, throughout the whole southern extremity of the continent, from Angola and the Zambesi on the north to the Cape of Good Hope on the south, the poison ordeal has been seldom described, from which we may perhaps infer that it has been little practised. However, it was formerly in vogue among the Zulus of Natal at the time when they were governed by the tyrant Chaka in the early part of the nineteenth century. In those days, whenever a person had died and been buried, his or her relations regularly had recourse to a diviner in order to discover the man who, through the agency of an evil spirit, had caused the death of their friend. Having consulted his magical instrument, which might be a horn of oil or a pot of boiling water, the diviner denounced somebody as the culprit, often fastening the guilt on a man or woman whom he knew to be at enmity with the family of the deceased. The person thus accused was at once taken into custody, and next morning before sunrise he had to swallow a mixture made from the bark of the *moave* tree and certain

The poison ordeal among the Zulus.

[1] Paul Pogge, *Im Reiche des Muata Jamwo* (Berlin, 1880), pp. 36 *sq.* As to the poison ordeal in Angola, see also Ladislaus Magyar, *Reisen in Süd-Afrika*, i. (Buda-Pesth and Leipsic, 1859) pp. 119-123, 136; Francisco Travassos Valdez, *Six Years of a Traveller's Life in Western Africa* (London, 1861), ii. 128 *sq.* According to Magyar (*op. cit.* p. 136) the poison draught is made from manioc and maize.

[2] J. Irle, *Die Herero* (Gütersloh, 1906), p. 141.

powders, the whole being made up in three balls, each of the size of a lemon. Before taking the poison he was stripped naked, lest he should conceal anything that might counteract the effect of the drug, and he knelt with his hands crossed before the man who administered the dose. While the accused was engaged in swallowing the poison, his relations and the kinsfolk of the deceased continued to beat the ground with sticks, while one of them cried out, "If this man or woman has communicated with evil spirits, may the *moave* burst him!" to which all responded in chorus, "Burst him!" Then the first speaker went on, "If this man or woman who has been the death of So-and-So, has been falsely accused, and has not communicated with evil spirits, then may the *moave* spare him!" to which all answered, "Spare him!" These prayers and responses they kept repeating till the accused vomited, which, we are told, happened only through the roguery of the man in charge of the ordeal, who had been bribed by the relations of the supposed culprit to diminish the dose. Yet the deluded victims, strong in the confidence of their innocence, seldom desired to take an antidote, having been bred up in the belief that the poison could affect only such as really held converse with evil spirits, and that it would spare all others.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Bawenda of the Transvaal.

Among the Bawenda, a Bantu tribe which inhabits the north-eastern corner of the Transvaal, between the Limpopo and Levuvu Rivers, no case of death or illness occurs without some living person being suspected or accused of having caused it by sorcery; for in the opinion of the Bawenda, as of many other savages, nobody dies a natural death.

[1] "Mr. Farewell's account of Chaka, the King of Natal," appended to Captain W. F. W. Owen's *Narrative of Voyages to explore the Shores of Africa, Arabia, and Madagascar* (London, 1833), ii. 398-400. Compare Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), p. 185. The term *moave*, *muavi*, or *mwavi* is applied to the poison used in ordeals by many tribes of Eastern Africa, some of them far distant from each other. The poison is said to be sometimes furnished by the *Parkia Bussei*; but probably the name is a general word which includes a variety of vegetable poisons all employed for this purpose. Compare Em. Perrot et Ém. Vogt, *Poisons de Flèches et Poisons d'Épreuve* (Paris, 1913), pp. 122 *sq.* If the tree from which the Zulus procured the poison for the ordeal was the *Erythrophleum*, whether *E. guineense* or *E. micranthum*, it would seem, as Dr. O. Stapf suggests to me, that they must have imported the bark; since no species of *Erythrophleum* is found in South-Eastern Africa.

Hence when any such misfortune has befallen them, the family of the sick or of the dead engage a witch-doctor to detect and bring to justice the witch or wizard (*moloi*), who is supposed to be the author of the calamity. If the witch-doctor lays the blame on two persons, and it cannot be determined by ordinary methods which of the two is in fact the criminal, recourse is had to the poison ordeal. Both of them are given a strongly poisonous potion to drink, and the one who is intoxicated thereby is clearly the guilty party and suffers the penalty of his crime by being clubbed to death.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Thonga of Portuguese East Africa.

The Thonga, a Bantu tribe of Portuguese East Africa, who inhabit the country about Delagoa Bay, stand in great fear of witchcraft. They believe that witches and wizards (*baloyi*) by their fell arts can rob, kill, or enslave their fellows; nay more, that they not only murder their victims but devour their flesh in the darkness of night. Hence the Thonga adopt many precautions against these dangerous beings, and resort to many expedients for the sake of detecting and punishing them. The supreme means of unmasking a witch or wizard is the poison ordeal. The poison (*mondjo*) used for this purpose is obtained from a plant of the Solaneae family which possesses intoxicating properties. However, the use of the ordeal is not limited to cases of witchcraft. Any person accused of any crime may appeal to it to demonstrate his or her innocence. A woman charged with adultery, for example, may say to her accuser, "Let us go and drink the poison." Accordingly, they repair to a medicine-man, whose business it is to prepare the decoction; he administers a little of the drug in a potion to both the accused and the accuser, and the one who, after swallowing the draught, shows symptoms of intoxication or loses consciousness, is declared guilty. Resort to the poison ordeal is compulsory after the death of a great chief in order to bring to light the sorcerer who by his spells has deprived the tribe of its head. But at any time the reigning chief may command his people to drink the poison with the intention of ridding the country of those public pests, the

[1] Rev. E. Gottschling, "The Bawenda," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxv. (1905) pp. 375, 377 *sq.*

witches and wizards. In the district of Nondwana the ceremony is performed as follows:—

Mode of procedure in the poison ordeal among the Thonga.

When it has been decided at the capital that all subjects shall undergo the ordeal, the chief sends word to the Shihahu folk to make ready the poison. These people are a small clan inhabiting the left bank of the Nkomati River not far from the sea. Their medicine-men cultivate the poison plant, though they have not a monopoly of it. They know also the secret of compounding the potion, which, among other strange ingredients, is said to contain the fat of a leper long since deceased, or a little of his powdered bones. To test the efficacy of the draught, the Shihahu folk experiment with it on the person of a certain man named Mudlayi, who is esteemed the very chief of all the wizards of the country. If the decoction produces in him the characteristic symptoms of intoxication, then it is judged fit for the purpose; but if it fails to intoxicate him, a fresh brew must be prepared, until the potion has acquired the requisite degree of strength. When that has been ascertained, messengers are despatched to all the subordinate chiefs, bidding them assemble, with all their people, at a certain time on the banks of a lake. In this general assembly every man and woman must defile before the owners of the decoction, and each of them receives and swallows a small mouthful of the hellbroth, tepid, from a particular vessel. At this stage of the proceedings some who have imbibed the poison are conscience-stricken and cry out, "I am a caster of spells!" All who thus confess their crime are collected together and placed on one side under a tree. The rest sit down in a row exposed to the fierce glare of the noonday sun, and receive strict orders to remain motionless, without stirring a limb or scratching their persons. While they sit there stiff and stark in a long line, the principal medicine-man, Mudlayi, begins to dance up and down in front of them, a large feather nodding from his head. All eyes are fixed intently upon him, and he returns the looks of all with a peculiar stony glare. Suddenly somebody scratches his arm. The medicine-man at once pounces down on him or her, and stooping over the culprit allows his nodding plume to rest on the forehead of the seated person. The man,

The dance of the medicine-man.

who has betrayed himself by scratching his arm, now attempts to seize the feather on the medicine-man's head and pull it out; but if the poison has begun to work on him, he cannot grasp the feather and only clutches the empty air instead. One after another, men and women exhibit the same symptoms of intoxication; one after another they are detected and exposed in the same way by the medicine-man, who continues to prance up and down the line, blowing his trumpet. All of the convicted culprits betray themselves still further by struggling to rise, then clutching at the grass to assist them, and finally collapsing in a heap or crawling feebly about on the ground. Their spittle dries up: their jaws are locked: they try to speak, but can only stammer. They are picked up, carried off, and deposited under the tree with such as had already confessed their guilt. When a number of witches and wizards have thus been eliminated, the seated crowd is bidden to rise. Jumping to their feet they must run at full speed to the lake and there bathe. On the way some, who have hitherto controlled themselves, are overcome by the effects of the poison; they jostle each other, tumble, and remain on the ground, unable to regain their feet. Some even fall down in the water. All such are witches and wizards. The rest who have passed through the ordeal successfully, return from the water, and are set at liberty after having received three pinches of a special powder to cleanse them from the defilement which they have contracted by drinking the hellbroth. As for the convicted criminals, the next thing is to wring a confession of their guilt from such as have not yet made a clean breast. To restore their lost power of speech, a beverage prepared from a certain herb is poured into their mouths, and they are rubbed with leaves on the cheeks and all over their bodies. Their tongues are now loosed; the truth comes out, and many lies with it. "Yes," they say, "I devour men! I ate So-and-so, and I still have some of his flesh in store! I hate So-and-So, and I would like to kill him, but I haven't done so yet. I bewitched the maize to hinder its growth." The penitents receive a severe reprimand. "Cease your witchcraft and enchantments," they are told, "remove your spells from the cereals, let them grow properly, or we

will kill you." In former days these wretches did not escape so lightly. Among the Thonga, as among the ancient Hebrews, death was the penalty denounced against witchcraft. A certain chief named Shiluvane prohibited the crime in a decree which ran as follows: "I do not allow anybody to die in my country except on account of old age. So let the witches and wizards (*baloyi*) at once cease their enchantments, or I will kill them all." The condemned criminals were executed by hanging, impalement, or drowning, according to the case; those whose offence was deemed less heinous were let off with a flogging or banishment. Nowadays witches and wizards are free to resume their nefarious calling on paying a paltry sum of ten or fifteen shillings, half of which is reported to stick in the pockets of the chiefs who condemn them, and who thus combine the satisfaction of justice, or the perpetration of injustice, with a substantial addition to their civil list. As to the medicine-man who mixes the potion and conducts the ordeal, he is said to be clever or sceptical enough not to leave the decision entirely to chance, but to proportion the strength of the dose to the presumed guilt of the drinker; while by his dance and waving plume and stony glare he so hypnotizes some of the crowd that they fall into a true cataleptic state. The native theory, however, as expounded by an old Thonga man, is that, after drinking the decoction, the witches or wizards are intoxicated by the human flesh which it contains; for they have thus done by day what they are accustomed to do by night, which is to prey on the bodies of their victims.[1]

Punishments formerly inflicted on persons found guilty by the poison ordeal.

Farther to the north, among the tribes of Sofala and Manica, in Portuguese East Africa, the poison ordeal seems to be resorted to only in cases of suspected sorcery or cannibalism. A man accused of injuring or killing another by spells or magic must undergo the ordeal. The poison is concocted and administered by the *nganga* or witch-doctor, on whose ill or good will the life of the accused depends. The poison is extracted from pieces of the bark of the

The poison ordeal in Sofala and Manica, Portuguese East Africa.

[1] Henri A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (Neuchâtel, 1912–1913), i. 416 *sq.*, ii. 460 *sqq.*, 483-487; *id.*, *Les Ba-Ronga* (Neuchâtel, 1898), pp. 433-436.

Erythrophleum, which are ground to a coarse powder and placed in a small calabash of water. The blood of a fowl is added to the mixture, and the draught is heated by red-hot pieces of quartz crystal dropped into the water. If the accused vomits the drug, he is innocent and safe; if he does not, he dies a painful death, while the bystanders heap all sorts of indignities and insults on him, as he lies writhing in agony on the ground. The supposed culprit is detected by the witch-doctor, who dances about arrayed in the skins of animals and with a sort of tiara of reedbuck horns upon his head. In the course of this dance he draws out suspected persons from the throng of spectators, till he at last pounces on the doomed man.[1]

The witch-doctor's dance.

Dos Santos on the poison ordeal in Sofala.

The use of the poison ordeal among the Bantu tribes of Sofala was recorded long ago by the old Portuguese historian, Friar João dos Santos. He says, "These Kaffirs have three kinds of most terrible and wonderful oaths which they make use of in trying cases, when a Kaffir is accused of any grave crime of which there is not sufficient proof, or when a debt is denied, and in other similar cases when it is necessary to leave the truth to be proved by the oath of the accused, when he is ready to take it in proof of his innocence. The first and most dangerous is called the oath of *lucasse*, which is a cup of poison that the accused is called upon to drink, with the assurance that if he is innocent the poison will leave him safe and sound, but if he is guilty he will die of it. Therefore those who are guilty when the time comes that they are obliged to take this oath generally confess their guilt, to avoid drinking the poison; but when they are innocent of the charge brought against them they drink the poison confidently and it does them no harm; and upon this proof of their innocence they are acquitted, and their accuser in punishment of the false testimony borne against them becomes the slave of him whom he falsely accused, and forfeits all his property and his wife and children, half going to the king and the other half to him who was accused."[2]

[1] R. C. F. Maugham, *Portuguese East Africa* (London, 1906), pp. 276-278.

[2] J. dos Santos, "Eastern Ethiopia," in G. McCall Theal's *Records of South-Eastern Africa*, vii. (1901) p. 204. Compare *id.*, in John Pinkerton's *General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London, 1808-1814), xvi. 690.

Passing still northward we come to the Zambesi. Among the Bantu tribes which inhabit the valley of this great river and the regions north of it, now comprised within Northern Rhodesia and British Central Africa, the poison ordeal flourishes, or used till lately to flourish, in rank luxuriance. On this subject a well-informed writer tells us that "on the Zambesi the poison ordeal is a great institution. When a death has occurred in a village through an accident with a lion or a crocodile, the diviner is called in to smell out the sorcerer. When suspicion is fixed on a person he has to undergo the poison ordeal, the theory of which is this: people use magic so as to eat human flesh without being detected. By magic they change themselves into crocodiles or lions, and lie in wait for the person they wish to eat; having eaten the person, they change themselves back into human beings again by magic. Now, it is supposed that if a person has human flesh in his stomach the poison will work inwardly and kill the person, for it combines with the human flesh he has eaten. If, however, he has eaten no human flesh the poison will be vomited up. Thus, a person who is accused of eating human flesh will say: 'I am quite certain I have eaten no human flesh, and so the poison will be at once rejected by my stomach. Yes: give me the poison, that I may prove that I am innocent.' People have been known to beg for this ordeal when they might have sought British protection. Their faith in the theory was so absolute that they preferred to demonstrate their innocence to all. There is a saving clause in the ordeal occasionally. A hen or a goat may be substituted for the man, and the poison is then given by proxy to the animal; if it dies under the test the man is declared guilty, but not otherwise. This ordeal, of course, is strictly forbidden in British territory; but the policing of the country is so inadequate that it probably still goes on secretly, though not so frequently as of old. The people would never inform against their own kith and kin."[1]

The poison ordeal on the Zambesi and in Northern Rhodesia and British Central Africa.

Animals as proxies in the ordeal.

When Livingstone was descending the Zambesi, he visited the village of a chief named Monina, situated on the river some distance above Tete, between the 32° and 33° of east longitude. "As we came away from Monina's

Livingstone on the poison ordeal in the valley of the Zambesi.

[1] Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), pp. 185 *sq.*

village," says the traveller, "a witch-doctor, who had been sent for, arrived, and all Monina's wives went forth into the fields that morning fasting. There they would be compelled to drink an infusion of a plant named *goho*, which is used as an ordeal. This ceremony is called *muavi*, and is performed in this way. When a man suspects that any of his wives have bewitched him, he sends for the witch-doctor, and all the wives go forth into the field, and remain fasting till that person has made an infusion of the plant. They all drink it, each one holding up her hand to heaven in attestation of her innocency. Those who vomit it are considered innocent, while those whom it purges are pronounced guilty, and put to death by burning. The innocent return to their homes, and slaughter a cock as a thankoffering to their guardian spirits. The practice of ordeal is common among all the negro nations north of the Zambesi. This summary procedure excited my surprise, for my intercourse with the natives here had led me to believe, that the women were held in so much estimation that the men would not dare to get rid of them thus. But the explanation I received was this. The slightest imputation makes them eagerly desire the test; they are conscious of being innocent, and have the fullest faith in the *muavi* detecting the guilty alone; hence they go willingly, and even eagerly, to drink it. When in Angola, a half-caste was pointed out to me, who is one of the most successful merchants in that country; and the mother of this gentleman, who was perfectly free, went, of her own accord, all the way from Ambaca to Cassange, to be killed by the ordeal, her rich son making no objection. The same custom prevails among the Barotse, Bashubia, and Batoka, but with slight variations. The Barotse, for instance, pour the medicine down the throat of a cock or of a dog, and judge of the innocence or guilt of the person accused, according to the vomiting or purging of the animal."[1]

Animals as proxies in the ordeal.

[1] David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London, 1857), pp. 621 *sq.* Compare David and Charles Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries* (London, 1865), pp. 120 (as to the Manganja), and p. 231 (as to the Batoka); David Livingstone, *The Last Journals* (London, 1874), i. 134 *sq.* As to the ordeal among the Barotse, see Eugène Béguin, *Les Ma-rotsé* (Lausanne and Fontaines, 1903), pp. 127 *sq.*; Lionel Decle, *Three Years in Savage Africa* (London, 1898), p. 76.

Among the A-Louyi of the Upper Zambesi, a suspected sorcerer must first plunge his hands into a cauldron of boiling water, and if they are scalded he is then subjected to the poison (*mwati*) ordeal. Should he fail to prove his innocence by vomiting the poison, he is placed on a sort of scaffold and burnt alive. A chief accused of sorcery may undergo the ordeal by proxy, the poison being swallowed for him by a slave or a fowl.[1]

Poison ordeal among the A-Louyi.

Among the Bantu tribes of British Central Africa the poison ordeal is, or rather was, commonly employed for the detection of witchcraft; and with these people witchcraft is closely associated with cannibalism. The witch or wizard is called "an eater of men." This need not imply that he has actually eaten anybody; it merely signifies that he has caused, or has tried to cause, the death of some person for the purpose of battening on the corpse. Such an imputation is, as has been pointed out, just the reverse of the vampire superstition, according to which the dead rise from the grave in order to suck the blood of the living. But, unlike the belief in vampires, the belief in cannibals need not be a mere superstition, it may correspond to a real practice. It is said that cannibalism of this sort is actually prevalent among the Anyanja, one of the tribes of this region, that among the Yaos, another tribe of British Central Africa, there exist secret societies which indulge in cannibalistic orgies, and that such practices have been spreading of late years.[2] The task of detecting the witch or wizard is commonly entrusted to a witch-doctor (*mabisalila* or *mavumbula*), a woman who dances up and down in a state of frenzy before the assembled people, smelling their hands to discover the scent of the human flesh they are thought to have consumed, till she proclaims aloud the name of the supposed culprit. The enraged crowd usually kills the accused on the spot.[3] But if for the time being he escapes with his life, he may be compelled to submit to the poison ordeal. However, that ordeal is not confined to cases of witchcraft; it is a regular form of judicial procedure

The poison ordeal among the tribes of British Central Africa. Association of witchcraft and cannibalism.

The witch-doctor's dance.

[1] E. Jacottet, *Études sur les langues du Haut-Zambèze*, Troisième Partie, *Textes Louyi* (Paris, 1901), pp. 155 *sq.*

[2] Miss A. Werner, *The Native Tribes of British Central Africa* (London, 1906), pp. 84 *sq.*, 98 note.

[3] Miss A. Werner, *op. cit.* pp. 89 *sq.*

for the discovery of crime, such as theft or other offences. And the intervention of the witch-doctor is not necessary to put the ordeal in operation. Anybody who feels himself under a cloud of suspicion may demand it in order to clear his character. So firm is the belief of the natives in the powerlessness of the poison to harm the innocent, that none except conscience-stricken criminals ever seem to shrink from the trial. On one celebrated occasion at Blantyre, when the life of the accused was saved by an impetuous Scotsman, who rushed into court and kicked over the pot of poison at the critical moment, the rescued man bitterly resented the intervention and owed his rescuer a grudge for the rest of his life. He complained that, by thus tampering with the source of justice at the fountain-head, the Scotsman had prevented him from vindicating the spotless purity of his character, which must thenceforth languish under the cold shade of popular suspicion and distrust.[1] Indeed, faith in the infallibility of the poison ordeal is said to be the most deeply rooted article in the creed of these people; if they believe in anything, it is in this ordeal.[2]

Faith of the natives in the justice of the ordeal.

Throughout British Central Africa the poison employed in the ordeal is extracted from the pounded bark of the tree *Erythrophleum guineense*, and is popularly known as *muavi*, *mwavi*, or *mwai*. It is prepared by a special official called the "pounder" (*mpondela* or *mapondera*), who is not always identical with the witch-doctor. When it has been decided to hold a trial by ordeal, this personage is sent for and brews the deadly stuff in presence of the assembled people by pounding the bark, steeped in water, in a small wooden mortar with a pestle, which has a cover fixed round it to prevent the liquid from splashing out. The infusion so produced is red in colour and very bitter in taste. Its effect is fatal within an hour or two, unless it causes sickness and vomiting, which are accordingly accepted as signs of innocence, while death under the influence of the drug is, as usual, regarded as an incontrovertible proof of guilt. However, so many who have drunk the poison escape with

The poison employed in the ordeal in British Central Africa.

[1] Miss A. Werner, *op. cit.* pp. 90, 169 *sq.*, 174.

[2] Rev. Duff Macdonald, *Africana, or the Heart of Heathen Africa* (London, Edinburgh, and Aberdeen, 1882), i. 160.

their lives that presumably the dose varies in strength, whether by accident or design. Certainly the "pounder" has ample means of diluting the poison in accordance with his own inclinations or the convincing nature of the arguments supplied by the parties to the suit. The usual dose is about half a pint; the accused come up one by one to drink, and then sit down on the ground to await results. But in cases where public feeling is strongly against the accused, the onlookers do not wait till the poison has produced its full effect, but despatch him as soon as it appears that he cannot vomit. Sometimes the poison is taken by proxy, being administered to a dog or a fowl, instead of to the accused man or woman, and according as the animal or bird survives or perishes, so is the accused innocent or guilty. To indicate or to establish the relationship between the two, each dog or fowl is tethered by a string to the person whom it represents. This mode of demonstrating innocence or guilt by deputy is, or was, often resorted to among the Angoni and Mokololo, when the somewhat despotic chiefs of these tribes commanded the inhabitants of a whole village or even district to submit to the ordeal for the purpose of discovering a real or imaginary criminal. In one famous case, consequent on the suicide of a chief's mother, so many fowls were employed, and the verdicts they gave were so contradictory, that it passed the wits of the natives to reconcile them in a higher unity, and the trial had to be abandoned altogether. Persons who die under the ordeal are not usually buried, but cast out into the wilderness to be devoured by wild beasts. On the other hand those who come out unscathed are entitled to receive compensation from their accusers for the danger, discomfort, and obloquy to which they have been subjected by false and malicious accusations.[1]

Animals as proxies in the ordeal.

So much for the poison ordeal in general, as it is practised among the tribes of Northern Rhodesia and British Central Africa. But as the custom varies somewhat from tribe to tribe, it may be well to supplement this general

The poison ordeal in particular tribes of Northern Rhodesia and British Central Africa.

[1] Miss A. Werner, *The Natives of British Central Africa* (London, 1906), pp. 90, 170 *sqq.*, 263 *sq.*; Rev. Duff Macdonald, *Africana, or the Heart of Heathen Africa* (London, 1882), i. 45, 159 *sq.*, 200, 204 *sq.*; Sir Harry H. Johnston, *British Central Africa* (London, 1897), pp. 441, 468.

account by particulars drawn from the usages of different tribes in this region.

The poison ordeal among the Tumbuka of British Central Africa. Confusion of sorcery and poisoning.

For example, the Tumbuka employ the poison ordeal to detect crimes which they class under the general head of witchcraft or sorcery (*ufwiti*), but which Europeans would distinguish as sorcery, poisoning, and cannibalism. In the first place, they think that death or disease may be caused either by sorcery or by poisoning, and, like the ancient Greeks, they confound these two very different things under one name. In their language the sorcerer and the poisoner are designated by one and the same term, *mfwiti*, just as in Greek the two are designated by the single term *pharmakeus*. This confusion of different crimes under one name has led to some confusion of law under British rule; for in their determination to put down the constant charges of sorcery (*ufwiti*), which were doing much harm in the villages, the authorities made it a criminal offence for one person to charge another with *ufwiti*, not noticing that thereby they were forbidding all accusations of poisoning (*ufwiti*) also, which is by no means, like sorcery, a purely imaginary crime, but on the contrary is a very real and dangerous one. For there is no doubt that several deadly poisons are known to the natives, and as little doubt, apparently, that among them bad men do sometimes employ these drugs to kill their fellows. The two poisons of which the Tumbuka, rightly or wrongly, stand most in fear are the gall of the crocodile and the gall of the hartebeest; and accordingly when either of these two beasts is killed, great and public care is taken to place the poison out of the reach of any ill-disposed person. For example, whenever the missionary who records these beliefs shot a hartebeest, his men always brought the gall publicly to him, and requested him to dispose of it with his own hands. They forbore to hide it themselves, lest afterwards a suspicion might attach to any one of them that, knowing where it was, he had returned, dug it up, and made use of its baneful properties.[1] But the name of sorcery (*ufwiti*) was also given to another real, not imaginary, offence against society, which consisted in devouring the bodies of the dead. "When a man became possessed by that form of *ufwiti* which must

Sorcery associated with cannibalism.

[1] Donald Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People* (London, 1914), pp. 143 *sq.*

have been madness with cannibalistic tendencies, retribution soon followed. He was the worst type of sorcerer. He became restless, and every night left his house and wandered about in the bush. He dug up corpses from the graves and ate them. He danced, naked, among the cattle at night, and did many other unmentionable things. If any one caught him at his sport, he killed him, in very cruel fashion, and the body was thrown aside. Neither the avenger nor any of the villagers spoke about the cause of his death, for it was an unmentionable shame to the whole community. But sometimes men were suspected of being *mfwiti*, though no one saw them in the act of their vile behaviour, and then the suspected man was made to drink a strong mixture of poison. After he had drunk it, he was not allowed to sit down until it acted; should he vomit, he proved his innocence, and his accusers had to pay him compensation, but if he died his body was burned in a great fire outside the village, and a heap of stones was thrown over him."[1] So incessant was the use of the ordeal in the Tumbuka and Tonga tribes, that in nearly every hut a bundle of the poison-bark might be found hidden away in the roof, ready to be used when occasion should serve. For domestic quarrels as well as public differences were settled by an appeal to this infallible touchstone.[2]

The poison ordeal among the Awemba of Northern Rhodesia. Ceremony at obtaining the bark from the tree for the poison ordeal.

In the Awemba tribe of Northern Rhodesia the poison (*mwavi*) used in the ordeal is generally obtained from the bark of the *Erythrophleum guineense* tree, which the Awemba call *wikalampungu*, but sometimes it is furnished by the bark of other trees. When the case to be tried is a serious one, the chief used to send some of his people into the forest to obtain the fatal bark. With them they took the medicine-man and a naked child. On reaching the tree they prayed and laid down some small white beads, apparently as an offering to the spirit who resides in the tree. Having thus paved the way for their depredations, they proceeded to beat the trunk of the tree with a stout log till the bark fell off in strips. Only such flakes as dropped off under their blows might be used to brew the poison. They were tied

[1] Donald Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People*, pp. 164 *sq.*

[2] W. A. Elmslie, *Among the Wild Ngoni* (London, 1899), p. 64.

up in a bundle of grass and placed in the hands of the naked child, who carried them back to the village, riding on the shoulders of an old man; for the child's feet might touch neither water nor mud, and the old man who bore him must avoid molehills and fallen logs on the way. However, the bundle of poison was not carried into the village, but deposited outside and there guarded by the medicine-man and one of the chief's retainers. The accused had to sleep that night outside of the village under close guard. As he was taken to the place where he was to pass the anxious hours till daybreak, the villagers would intone the Song of Witchcraft, singing, "The *mwavi* tree desires the father of sorcery," and repeating the usual formula, "If you have not done this thing, may you survive; but if you are guilty, may you die!" Early next morning the suspected person was stripped naked, except for a girdle of leaves. Should he still persist in protesting his innocence, he was given the poisoned cup, which was sometimes handed him by a young child. If on swallowing the draught he swelled up without vomiting, it was regarded as proof positive of his guilt, and unless the chief relented, the culprit's doom was sealed; he died with all the symptoms of violent poisoning. In the more serious cases, such as accusations of witchcraft, the poison was almost invariably allowed to take its course. The body was afterwards burnt by the medicine-man, lest the dead wizard or felon should rise again as an evil spirit to plague the village. Sometimes, before it was burnt, the corpse was chopped into small pieces. The children, and sometimes the whole family of the executed criminal, were sold by the chief as slaves to the Arabs. If the accused were lucky enough to vomit up the poison, the chief would give him the Prayer of Absolution and declare him innocent. But before he received this solemn absolution, he had to go naked into the forest and there clothe himself in leaves only, until the chief sent him a present of cloth to wear instead of the costume of our first parents. Those who had accused him falsely had to pay a heavy fine in slaves, cattle, or goods, which went to the chief, though that dignitary bestowed a part of them on the injured man. A good deal of trickery is said to have crept into

Mode of procedure in the poison ordeal.

the administration of the ordeal. Sometimes the accused might contrive to swallow an emetic just before gulping the poison, and sometimes the medicine-man is reported to have mixed an emetic with the draught, in consideration of a bribe which he had accepted from the accused or his friends. When the accused was a man of importance or a relative of the king, he might, as a particular favour, be allowed to drink the poison by deputy, a cock appearing as usual in the character of his proxy at the bar of justice.[1]

Fowls as proxies in the ordeal.

It deserves to be noticed that among the Awemba, as among the neighbouring tribes of British Central Africa, the crimes of sorcery, poisoning, and cannibalism appear to be compounded, or confounded, in the native mind. That the sorcerers sometimes reinforced their enchantments by the use of deadly poisons, which they administered to their victims in porridge or beer, is said to be certain; and the belief that they further indulged in ghoulish banquets among the graves is deeply rooted. As the Awemba are an offshoot from the cannibal tribe of the Waluba, it is not incredible that certain depraved wretches should gratify their hereditary craving after human flesh in this disgusting manner.[2]

Association of sorcery, poisoning, and cannibalism.

Among the Nyanja-speaking tribes of British Central Africa the conceptions of sorcery, poisoning, and cannibalism seem also to run into each other. In many cases of illness, and in all which prove fatal, the sickness is ascribed to the machinations of a sorcerer (*mfiti*), who may compass the death of his victim by placing magical stuff at the door of the man's hut, or burying it in the path along which he must pass, or slipping it into the beer which he is about to drink, all for the purpose of killing the poor wretch first and

Association of sorcery, poisoning, and cannibalism among the Nyanja-speaking tribes of British Central Africa.

[1] Cullen Gouldsbury and Hubert Sheane, *The Great Plateau of Northern Rhodesia* (London, 1911), pp. 54 *sq.*, 61 *sq.*; J. C. C. Coxhead, *The Native Tribes of North-Eastern Rhodesia, their Laws and Customs* (London, 1914), p. 16. The poison ordeal, as it is practised by the Awemba (Wawemba), Wakondes, and Wawiwa of this region, is briefly noticed by H. von Wissmann, *My Second Journey through Equatorial Africa, from the Congo to the Zambesi* (London, 1891), p. 276. Dr. O. Stapf, of Kew, suggests to me that the poison used by the Awemba may be procured from the *Erythrophleum pubistamineum* rather than from the *Erythrophleum guineense*. See above, p. 310.

[2] Cullen Gouldsbury and Hubert Sheane, *The Great Plateau of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 91.

eating his body afterwards; for apparently in the opinion of these people a poison which you step over in the doorway or the path is quite as fatal in its operation as one which you have taken into your stomach. Some sorcerers, it is said, do not prey on the bodies of their victims, but most of them commit murder for the express purpose of glutting their cannibal appetites. On the night when the murdered man is buried, his murderer is believed to beat a drum and light a fire near the grave, to attract the attention of his fellow witches and wizards, who come flocking like vultures to carrion. Common folk, indeed, cannot see these ghouls, but they sometimes catch sight of their fires twinkling in the darkness of night. The cannibals are supposed to gather at the grave, men, women, and children, it may be, to the number of fifty or sixty, and to call on the dead man by his child-name. Up he comes to the surface of the ground, and being restored to life he looks about, but he cannot speak. Sometimes to facilitate his ascent they dig away the earth. Having resuscitated him, they kill him a second time with the tail of a black-tailed gnu, and cut up his body, which in the process appears to be miraculously multiplied, for sometimes the flesh fills no less than one hundred baskets. This crime, real or imaginary, of devouring the dead is said to be the only vice for which the natives have a genuine abhorrence. When a death has taken place, the blame of it is commonly laid at the door of a relation, who has brought it about by sorcery in the native sense, which, as we have seen, may signify either witchcraft or poisoning. To discover the actual culprit, the chief commands all the relations to drink the poison (*mwavi*). Sometimes apparently all the inhabitants of a village must submit to the ordeal. The medicine-man comes to the village the night before the trial is to take place, and he brings with him the little wooden mortar, into which he chips the bark. A man and a woman are appointed by the chief to stand by while the bark is being chipped. If in the process of pounding the bark a chip flies out towards the woman, then women will die under the ordeal; but if it flies out towards the man, then men will die. When the bark has been triturated, the medicine-man sends people to

The poison ordeal in these tribes.

fetch water, and when they bring it, he pours it into the mortar. Then, after walking round the crowd, he dips a small cup into the poison, brings it up half full, and passes it to the man and woman who stand next him; and they say, "If we are witches or wizards (*mfiti*), let this kill us; but if not, may we vomit before the sun grows hot." After that, all drink, the men and women standing in line, a woman behind each man. The headman of the village drinks first, and each man drinks with a woman, generally man and wife. After they have drunk they sit down. Those who are going to vomit kneel with their hands on the ground in front. Those who are going to die sit still and do not talk; they throw their heads from side to side, and fall backward in convulsions. Death follows in ten or fifteen minutes. There is no beating of drums, and the medicine-man looks on in silence. When all is over, the dead are dragged out of the village and burnt. The medicine-man is paid with the calico stripped from the corpses, and immediately takes his departure.[1]

Native description of the poison ordeal among the Nyanja-speaking tribes.

The ordinary procedure on such occasions is minutely described in a native Nyanja account of the poison ordeal, which I here reproduce in a literal translation, because in its pathetic simplicity and directness it brings home to us, better than any laboured rhetorical description could do, the tragedy of those scenes in which, over a great part of Africa, superstition under the mask of justice has from time immemorial claimed and carried off innumerable victims.

The medicine-man summoned.

"In the event of a chief's wife dying, or perhaps his child, the chief holds a consultation with the village elders, saying, 'You at the village here, we wish to consult the oracle.' At the 'chief's' ordeal they summon all the headmen, but in the case of the 'people's' ordeal, every one partakes of the poison. When they see that people are often dying, they talk it over with the headmen, saying, 'Look here at the village, here people are dying and we wish to summon the medicine-man, that he may follow up the clue for us at the village.' So they send one youth to summon the medicine-

[1] H. S. Stannus, "Notes on some tribes of British Central Africa," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xl. (1910) pp. 293, 299, 301 *sq.*, 305.

man. He arrives very late in the evening. They put him in some hut, without people knowing that he has come. In the morning a young man gets up, and goes and stands at the open space in the village [where the men sit and talk, and where the different disputes are settled], and when he has climbed on an ant-hill, that all men may hear, he says, 'Do you hear, you must not eat your *nsima* porridge to-day; he who is asleep let him arise that he may himself hear. They are saying you all must bathe, you taste a little of the beer that is not sweet, to-day.'

The ordeal announced.

"He who was about to have his morning sup, pushes aside his flour against the hut wall, he begins to hide his household goods, for, says he, 'How do we know we shall return from there?' And all their beads are taken off. When they see the sun is beginning to rise, every one assembles. And then they begin to pick out some strong young men, saying, 'So-and-so must stay behind, and So-and-so, they must look after their companions and keep guard over the village, lest the medicine-man's children begin to pillage the property of them who do not die.' And then they begin to set out to go to the spot the poison is to be drunk at, and they carry in readiness a grain mortar and a pestle (just any mortar), and follow the path in single file, and come to where the witch-doctor is, and he begins to arrange them in a line; they do not turn their backs to the sun, the women spread out in one line, the men in another. The place is black with people. The medicine-man has his feather head-dress on, and goat's-hair bands are round his wrists. And then some old man gets up to present that for which the medicine is pounded, perhaps a goat, and this is for opening his bag [where he keeps the poison].

The people assemble to drink the poison.

"Thereupon the doctor says, 'Give to me the spirit of the dead.' Then that old man gets up, and going up to the village chief, tells him, 'The doctor is seeking the spirit of the dead.' And the chief speaks, saying, 'Well, and know you not them who have died here?' And then the old man gives him, the doctor, the spirit, saying, 'Here So-and-so and So-and-so have died, and it is on their account we summon you.' Then the pounder of the poison says, 'Give to me the partakers of human flesh who have eaten these ones you

The medicine-man prepares the poison.

name.' And then they call up two people, a man and a woman, saying, 'Let her of the race of the Hills, and him of such and such a clan come here.' And they whom they thus called come and stand near the mortar. Then the pounder of the ordeal poison opens his monkey-skin wallet, pulls out the poison bark, and breaks it off into the mortar with a hippo's tooth. When he is chipping it off, he does not finish all the bark he has in his hand, he chips off a little and leaves the rest. When he is doing this the bark jumps, and falls on the left, and again on the right. They surely know that here to-day wonders will befall and that men will die and women. Then the medicine-man says, 'Give us men to go and draw water.' Then the old man asks, 'How many men shall we bring?' And perhaps he says, 'Bring three, because the people are many,' and the doctor tells them, 'You must not glance behind, but just draw the water and return.' (Lest they give warning to the flesh-eaters.) When he has finished cutting down the bark, he bids his attendant 'begin to pound.' They do not pound the poison bark as they would grain, they pound, thud! thud! and turn the pestle in the hands. While the attendant is pounding, the pounder of the bark keeps tapping rat, tat, tat, on the mortar, with his monkey-stick [which the monkeys use for digging roots], and chants—

The song of the medicine-man.

"*You have heard mother of children,*
Mother of children of Kundamva.
Indiscriminate slaughter is the game war plays,
It slew the baboon at Bongwe.
When you slay let your victims fall backward not forward.
Bag, make the poison hear my words.
You are come into the village, you are their advocate.
They say, that here so and so and so and so have died.
It is to plead for them you have been summoned.
There they are, she of the house of the Hills, and he of So and So's clan.
She of the Hills, it is she who has taken the basket.
He, the man, took the little sharp knife.
If it be not you, on the spot, on the spot, you must vomit,
If it be you,
Oh slay, slay, slay.

The water poured on the poison.

"When they come with the water, the medicine-man takes a water-jar full, and pours it into the mortar. You can hear

the froth come foaming up, and then he draws a cup of the poison and struts about stirring it with his monkey-stick, and uttering this incantation—

The medicine-man's incantation.

" *Pick them out, pick them out, pick them out,*
You see only the morning's sun, its rays when sinking in the west
you must not see.
Are you not that one?
You went to Zomba,
You beat the drum,
It was heard in the 'Never-reach-there country' of the fly,
The spurred fly.
There is a squint-eyed lizard there.
If it were not you who beat that drum,
You must vomit.
If it were you,
You must die.

" *You went into the regions of the air,*
You captured a ray of the sun,
You likened it unto a girdle,
Saying, 'Do you be my strength,
That when the poison comes,
You will give me the mastery over it,
I shall win.'
This girdle do you sever, sever, sever.
You swallowed the egg of a fish-eagle,
That the poison when it came might become as naught,
This egg you must smash.

" *You took the spleen of a crocodile,*
You laid it in your heart,
You took a python's belly,
You swallowed it, that power might be yours,
Do you [*my poison bark*] *rend these.*

" *You took wax,*
You smeared it on your feet,
Going in your neighbours' fields,
Going with stealthy tread to gather up his grain,
To dust off again in your own garden,
Your companions are in want,
You have wealth to overflowing.

" *When you see your neighbour's child,*
You say, 'Why should he walk thus at large?
But surely I had better have eaten him.'
He who thinks thus shall enter here [*into the mortar*].

"*The broken gourd-cups off the grave you beat together, that they might turn into snakes.*
Was it not you who sang the song, saying,
'If it be large and heavy, if it be large and heavy, if it be large and heavy,
They go about rolling it,
If it be small and light, they just lift it' [*the corpse*].
Was it not you who sang so?
I seem to think I heard you.

"*That little razor have you brought it now?*
'No, I have forgotten it' [*supposed answer*].

"*Maiden, beautiful maiden, E! E! E!*
You took the arm-bones of the children of men,
You used to go and dance with them,
The squint-eyed lizard is on his seat, and
Sounding the drum,
Wheeling ever one way.
Now in the opposite direction, see they have rent the drum.

"*There is a thing that walks by night,*
There is something that comes by day.
It has seen him.

"'No, to-day we have met each other, the boundary is there, from the east to the zenith is yours, from the zenith to the west is mine alone.' He kneels down where one of the human flesh-eaters is, he does not address the demon himself, but talks with another who is next him, and says, 'My child, where did you get your black magic? Did you get it that you might be all-powerful, you alone?' When he gets up he exclaims, 'I have got you, you must not escape, you must go in there, in there, you must enter here' [into the mortar]. When he sees that his attendant has finished pounding the poison, he takes some water and pours it into the mortar, and stirs it, and removes the dregs and takes two gourd-cups, and fills them with the poison. The woman and the man, they are the first to drink. Then the doctor makes every one else do so. Two men drink, he draws again, and gives two women. And so on until all have partaken. The medicine-man administers the poison.

"Then the witch-finder says, 'That beer I had great trouble in buying, you must not waste it, no, you there, we only told you to sip it, do not you see it is a small pot?' Then he knocks down the mortar with his foot, and beats The effects of the poison; how the people die.

together two pieces of metal. When he sees that one human flesh-eater is dead, he says he has caused the mortar to fall. Some, when dying, cry out [like a hyena], 'Uwi, uwi'; and people know he used to transform himself into that animal; should he roar like a lion, they know he was at times that mighty beast. Others again, when dying, clench their hands. Should they clench one hand, it is known they have eaten five people; if they clench both, men know their victims have been ten. When all have vomited, he causes the survivors to jump over the path. When he sees a man has jumped, he knows that one is an ordinary person and not an eater of human flesh, and the reason the doctor knows this is because he has washed the poison with a medicine made from the *siswiri* mouse [and it cannot cross a path and live]. Then the medicine-man says, 'Let them return to the village now, where a tree has fallen you cannot hide the fall thereof.' Any one who has withstood all these tests, on seeing the grass tuft on his hut, dies. When the doctor hears a man has died, he goes to the place to strip him of his cloth and cut off the belt of beads from his waist. Of them who die at the drinking-place and who are free born, their friends make some payment to the doctor, saying, 'Let me go and bury them.' Should the dead man be a slave they burn the body. They who remained behind at the village will drink on the morrow. The pounder of the poison, on returning to his home, is given a goat, perhaps a slave whose father has died from the poison. Anything the dead human flesh-eaters may have worn, the doctor takes home with him and washes his poison bark with it, that it may still retain its virtue. In the case of a man who dies from drinking the poison, his spirit is not brought back to the village, but is driven out into the bush."[1]

The test of innocence.

Stripping the dead.

The spirits of the dead driven away.

The guilt of the medicine-man.

This naïve account of the poison ordeal sheds quite unconsciously a very sinister light on the part played in it by the medicine-man, for it shows that he has a personal

[1] R. Sutherland Rattray, *Some Folk-lore Stories and Songs in Chinyanja, with English translation and notes* (London, 1907), pp. 85-92. In this passage the last seven lines at the foot of p. 91 are in some confusion through the accidental transposition of words and sentences. I have restored the sense by altering the order of some words and sentences, without adding or subtracting anything. On the last line but one of p. 86 I have corrected a grammatical slip ("them" for "they whom").

interest in killing as many of the people as possible, since he appropriates their clothes and ornaments; in fact, he is paid in direct proportion to the number of murders he commits. Accordingly each one of these public poisoners has a pecuniary motive for fostering and confirming in the minds of the deluded people that faith in the discriminative power of the poison from which he derives a part, perhaps the most considerable part, of his income. We may charitably hope that not all members of the profession are actuated by the basest motives and are wholly callous to the suffering which they inflict; but the analogy of the criminal classes in civilized society makes it probable that among African medicine-men there are not a few ruthless wretches who take to the lucrative business of poisoning as an easy means of earning a livelihood, and who are as indifferent to the agonies of their victims as to the infamy of their own behaviour.

The poison ordeal among the Bantu tribes of German East Africa.

The use of the poison ordeal is familiar also to the Bantu tribes of German East Africa. Thus in the district of Mkulwe or Mkurue, to the south of Lake Rukwa, when the sickness of a chief, or the death of important people in rapid succession, is traced by the medicine-man to witchcraft, that powerful personage requires that every inhabitant of the village shall prove his innocence or guilt by drinking a decoction of the poisonous *moavi* (*mwavi*) bark. As usual, innocence is proved by vomiting up the poison, and guilt by retaining it in the stomach and dying from its effect. The use of the ordeal is now forbidden under heavy penalties, but it is still sometimes resorted to in secret, and most of the natives retain their faith in its infallibility. When the young wives of old men are suspected of adultery, they are allowed to clear their character by a milder form of the ordeal. A piece of the bark is thrown into boiling water, and the accused must twice dip both hands slowly into the seething fluid. If she is scalded, she is guilty and must name her paramour, who is obliged to pay a heavy fine, while as a rule the woman escapes with nothing worse than scalded hands.[1]

[1] Alois Hamberger, "Religiöse Überlieferungen und Gebräuche der Landschaft Mkulwe," *Anthropos*, iv. (1909) p. 315.

The poison ordeal among the Wafipa of German East Africa.

Again, among the Wafipa, who occupy the country on the south-eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika, between 7° and 8° of south latitude, when a man has been accused of a crime, and the testimony adduced against him appears to the judges insufficient to establish his guilt, the prosecutor may demand that the accused shall undergo the poison ordeal. This demand he has a legal right to make, and if he insists on it, the tribunal cannot refuse to grant him this satisfaction. However, to prevent litigants from lightly and heedlessly pushing matters to an extremity, the plaintiff in such cases is required to pay down caution money to the value of about six francs, and is warned that if the ordeal should go against him he will be liable to the payment of a heavy fine. The poison (*mwavi*) to be employed in the trial is extracted from the bark of a tall and handsome tree, of which the natives distinguish two species. The action of the poison derived from the one tree is almost instantaneous; the action of the poison derived from the other is less rapid and violent. It is the latter poison which is used in the ordeal. The day before the parties submit their case to this final arbitrament, they present themselves before the judges, each of them bringing his mattock in his hand. There they throw their mattocks in the air and observe anxiously on which side they fall. He whose mattock falls with the convex side up will win his case; and he whose mattock falls with the concave side up will lose his case. If the omen is against the accused, he accepts it as a prognostic of his approaching doom, and bursts into loud lamentations, while the accuser on the other hand experiences a corresponding elevation of spirits. Next morning, in presence of the whole village, the bark of the poison tree is pounded to fine powder in a mortar, and two pinches of the powder are thrown into a cup of water, which is given to the accused to drink. Having drained the cup, he paces up and down the public place of the village, gesticulating violently in his effort to vomit the poison, and for the same purpose he is allowed to swallow from time to time some mouthfuls of cold water handed to him by a child. But a watch is kept on him, for within twenty-four hours he must either vomit or die. If he vomits, he is, as usual, declared innocent, and his accuser is bound to pay a sum equal

to, or greater than, the accused would have had to pay if his guilt had been established. If he dies, his family must either pay a fine or be seized as slaves. Fear of these serious consequences induces some caution in making appeals to the poison ordeal; often, in the uncertainty of the event, the relations both of the accuser and of the accused take to flight before the fateful day, lest in the case of an adverse verdict they should be sold into slavery. In recent times some of the native tribunals have mitigated the form of the ordeal. The fruit of the *mwavi* tree is thrown into a vessel of boiling water, and the accused must draw the fruit (*loukousou*) twice from the water with his hand. If his hand shows no burns, he is declared innocent. Both sorts of ordeal may be undergone by proxy in the person of a friend, a brother, or a slave, unless the charge is one of sorcery. In that case justice is never tempered with mercy: the poison cup is always fatal to a sorcerer: his body is mangled by the people with their spears and reduced to ashes on a pyre.[1]

Mitigated form of the ordeal.

The poison ordeal is also in vogue among the Wanyamwesi, a large tribe who occupy an extensive country of German East Africa to the south of the Lake Victoria Nyanza. Here, too, the poison consists of an infusion of *mwavi* bark, which has been pounded between stones; here, too, to vomit the poison is a proof of innocence, and to retain it in the stomach is at once a demonstration of guilt and a cause of death. Sometimes the medicine-man (*mganga*) administers the poison in the first instance to a hen, which appears as proxy for the defendant. But if all parties are not satisfied with the result of the experiment on the fowl, there is no help for it but the defendant must swallow the poison in his own person.[2] Among the Wagogo, another tribe of the same region, whose country lies to the eastward of that of the Wanyamwesi, the custom

The poison ordeal among the Wanyamwesi, Wagogo, and Wahehe of German East Africa.

[1] Mgr. Lechaptois, *Aux rives du Tanganika* (Algiers, 1913), pp. 104-107. The name of the fruit (*loukousou*) here employed in the ordeal resembles the name (*lucasse*) applied by Dos Santos to the poison used in the ordeal in Sofala. See above, p. 376. The ordeal of boiling water or oil is common in Africa, but I have not attempted to illustrate it in this essay. For some examples see A. H. Post, *Afrikanische Jurisprudenz* (Oldenburg and Leipsic, 1887), ii. 122 *sq.*

[2] (Sir) Richard F. Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (London, 1860), ii. 357; Franz Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika* (Berlin, 1894), p. 93.

of the poison ordeal was similar, and in light cases it was similarly permissible to administer the poison to a fowl instead of to the accused. The poison was, as usual, an infusion of the pounded bark of the *mwavi* tree (*Erythrophleum guineense*).[1] Among the Wahehe, who occupy the country to the east of the Wagogo, the ordeal was again similar, and similarly in lighter cases the poison might be administered to a dog or a fowl instead of to the accused. The German officer, who reports the practice, was unable to ascertain the precise nature of the poison employed in the ordeal; but he tells us that it was imported from Ungoni, and that to meet the cases as they occurred the sultan or head chief used to procure a supply of the poison in advance.[2]

The poison ordeal among the Wa-Giriama of British East Africa.

Among the Wa-Giriama, a Bantu tribe of British East Africa who inhabit a strip of country some miles inland from the coast, between Kilifi and the Sabaki River, when a person apparently in good health dies suddenly, the relations consult a medicine-man (*mganga*) as to whether the death was due to natural causes or not. If the man of skill, after due investigation, decides that the deceased was killed by somebody, he will further denounce the murderer by name, and if the accused denies his guilt, he is compelled to submit to the poison ordeal. The medicine-man, accompanied by an assistant, goes out into the forest and there collects the roots and leaves of a certain plant called *mbareh*. These he places in a wooden mortar, and pouring water on them beats them to pieces with a pestle. Some of the infusion is then decanted into a coco-nut and given to the accused to drink, while at the same time he is informed that, if he is innocent, the potion will do him no harm, whereas if he is guilty, he will die. Should he refuse to drink, he is put to death by the relations of the man whom he is alleged to have murdered.[3]

The poison ordeal among the Wanika of British East Africa.

Among the Wanika of British East Africa, who include a number of tribes or sub-tribes inhabiting the country a little way inland from the sea in the south-eastern part of the territory, murder

[1] Heinrich Claus, *Die Wagogo* (Leipsic and Berlin, 1911), pp. 55 *sq.* (*Baessler-Archiv*).

[2] E. Nigmann, *Die Wahehe* (Berlin, 1908), pp. 71 *sq.* Compare Otto Dempwolff, "Beiträge zur Volksbeschreibung der Hehe," *Baessler-Archiv*, iv. (1913) p. 109.

[3] Captain W. E. H. Barrett, "Beliefs of the Wa-Giriama, etc., British East Africa," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xli. (1911) p. 23.

and sorcery are capital crimes, and if the evidence is inadequate or conflicting, a decision is obtained by recourse to an ordeal. One of the ordeals in use consists in compelling the accused to eat a piece of poisoned bread; if he escapes uninjured, he is deemed innocent, otherwise he is pronounced guilty and punished accordingly.[1] Among the Wawanga of the Elgon District, in British East Africa, when two persons have a dispute which they cannot settle peaceably between themselves, a medicine-man will sometimes administer a potion to both of them, and the one who falls down insensible after drinking the stuff loses his case and often his life, being belaboured by the winner with sticks, which complete the work begun by the draught. If both parties fall down impartially, it is judged that the medicine or charm has failed to work. Though we are not told, we may infer that poison is one of the ingredients in the potion. This is a general form of trial for all offences, and the results which it yields are presumably in every case equally satisfactory.[2]

The poison ordeal among the Wawanga of British East Africa.

The poison ordeal appears not to be employed by the Nilotic tribes of British East Africa, though some of them resort to ordeals by drinking in various forms. Thus among the Masai, if a man is accused of having done a wrong, he drinks blood given him by the accuser and says, "If I have done this deed, may God kill me." If he has really committed the offence, he is supposed to die, but to go unharmed if he is guiltless.[3] The Suk in like manner believe that blood from a goat's neck, mixed with milk, will cause the death of the liar who drinks it after laying a false claim to stolen property; also that water drunk from a stolen article will cause the death of the thief or of a person who has borne false witness in the case.[4]

Ordeals by drinking blood among the Masai and Suk of British East Africa.

At the present time the Bantu tribes of Kavirondo, a

The poison ordeal among the Bantu tribes of Kavirondo.

[1] Charles New, *Life, Wanderings, and Labours in Eastern Africa* (London, 1883), pp. 111 *sq.*

[2] Hon. Kenneth R. Dundas, "The Wawanga and other tribes of the Elgon District, British East Africa," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) p. 42.

[3] A. C. Hollis, *The Masai* (Oxford, 1905), p. 345.

[4] Mervyn W. H. Beech, *The Suk, their Language and Folklore* (Oxford, 1911), p. 28. Among the Akikuyu "the elders arrange a forced trial by ordeal of mixing the urine of the two parties, which both drink. The guilty one will die in a month; if neither die 'both have told lies.'" See W. Scoresby Routledge and Katherine Routledge, *With a Prehistoric People* (London, 1910), p. 213.

district situated at the north-eastern corner of Lake Victoria Nyanza, have recourse to trial by ordeal only for the purpose of settling cases of homicide, real or imaginary. They do not acknowledge that death can take place through natural causes. No sooner, therefore, has somebody died than somebody else is suspected of having killed him either by casting a spell over him or by secretly administering a dose of poison. The witch-doctor of the tribe is accordingly sent for and receives an account of the symptoms which attended the sickness and death of the deceased. Having maturely considered them and consulted his colleagues, the sage denounces some person as the murderer, and summons him to stand his trial. If the accused admits his guilt, condemnation follows, and the customary fine is imposed. But if he steadfastly protests his innocence, the accuser challenges him to undergo the ordeal. The mode of conducting the ordeal among these tribes is as follows. The witch-doctor prepares a poisonous concoction, which he mixes in native beer, and the chiefs and their followers are invited to witness the proceedings. In a circle formed by the crowd of spectators the accuser and the accused stand facing each other and partake in equal measure of the poisonous draught. If the accused is the first to fall senseless to the ground, he is declared to be guilty. Judgment is there and then pronounced against him, and confiscation of his goods follows. If he dies from the poison, all funeral ceremonies are denied him; his body is thrown into the high grass to be devoured by wild beasts, and his relations must pay compensation. Should the accuser be the first to succumb under the action of the poison, another trial is arranged to take place after a lapse of three days, and in the meantime search is made for a substitute. These dilatory tactics are persisted in until the patience of the accused is exhausted and he admits his guilt and pays the damages demanded of him. Should he, however, not only deny his guilt but refuse to submit to the ordeal, his cattle and other domestic animals are seized, his crops and fruit-trees are cut down and destroyed, his huts are burned to the ground, and he himself is driven forth from the society of his tribesmen. None will admit him into their company, or afford him food and shelter. If he removes farther off and

builds a new hut, they follow him up and treat him again in the same rigorous manner as before, until, worn out by persecution, he either sullenly professes his guilt or reluctantly consents to undergo the ordeal. Sometimes, when the supposed criminal proves recalcitrant, he is seized, pinned to the ground by strong forked sticks pressed on his neck, arms, and legs, and in this helpless position has the draught forced down his throat.[1] According to another account, the accuser and the accused in these ordeals may be represented by proxies, who swallow the poison for them; and if the plaintiff's proxy is the first to collapse, the case is quashed.[2]

Proxies in the ordeal.

The poison ordeal is also in use among the Basoga, a Bantu people who inhabit a district on the northern shore of Lake Victoria Nyanza. It is commonly resorted to in cases of doubt and difficulty. Accuser and accused drink a liquid prepared from the *madudu*, a narcotic plant. Or they may depute the disagreeable task to their slaves, who swallow the potion for them. The final appeal, however, is said to be to the chief.[3]

The poison ordeal among the Basoga.

Among the Baganda, a powerful Bantu nation, whose country adjoins that of the Basoga on the west, the poison ordeal was resorted to in cases where neither of two disputants could prove himself to be in the right, or where one of them was dissatisfied with the judgment given by the king. The poison was administered by a priest attached to the temple of the war-god Kibuka. It bore the native name of *madudu* and was obtained by boiling the fruit of the datura plant. A cup of the decoction was handed by the priest to each of the parties, who after drinking it were made to sit down until the drug should take effect. Meantime the priest also seated himself on the ground at a little distance. When he thought that the poison had had time to act, he bade the disputants arise, step over a plantain stem, and come to him. If one of them was able to do so, and could reach the priest, kneel, and thank him for

The poison ordeal among the Baganda.

[1] Father Francis M. Burns (of the Congregation of Mill Hill, Nyenga, Uganda), "Trial by Ordeal among the Bantu-Kavirondo," *Anthropos*, v. (1910) p. 808.

[2] C. W. Hobley, *Eastern Uganda* (London, 1902), p. 21. Compare Sir Harry H. Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate*, Second Edition (London, 1904), ii. 751.

[3] M. A. Condon, "Contribution to the Ethnography of the Basoga-Batamba, Uganda Protectorate," *Anthropos*, vi. (1911) p. 382.

settling the case, judgment was given in his favour. If both contrived to reach the priest, they were thought to be equally in the right; if neither of them succeeded in reaching him, they were considered to be equally in the wrong. The immediate effect of the drug resembled intoxication, but its consequences were frequently fatal. If one or both of the suitors died from drinking the poison, their death was accepted as the judgment of the god. A long period of illness often followed the use of the drug, even when the patient ultimately recovered.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Banyoro.

Among the Banyoro, another powerful Bantu nation, whose territory adjoins that of their rivals the Baganda on the west, the poison ordeal was similar. "When the king was in doubt as to the rights of a case which had been brought before him for trial, or should the parties appeal to what was deemed the final test, the poison ordeal was resorted to. The poison-cup contained a mixture made from the seeds of the datura plant, which were boiled and the water from them given to each of the litigants to drink. After drinking the potion, the men sat for a time until the drug had taken effect, when they were called upon to rise and walk to the judge to hear his decision and thank him for it. The person who was able to rise and walk to the judge won the case. It was seldom that both men could rise and walk, indeed in most cases one of them was unable to move and usually both of them suffered from a long illness afterwards, and often one or other died. The property of the person who died was confiscated, a portion of it was given to the successful person, and the remainder was given to the king."[2] Among the Banyoro, as among many other African tribes, the poison was sometimes administered to two fowls, which acted as proxies for the human litigants.[3]

Fowls as proxies in the ordeal.

The poison ordeal among the Wawira.

The Wawira, who inhabit the open grass-lands and dense

[1] John Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), p. 341. The use of the poison ordeal (*muavi*) among the Baganda is briefly mentioned by L. Decle, *Three Years in Savage Africa* (London, 1898), p. 450.

[2] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu* (Cambridge, 1915), pp. 23 *sq.*

[3] *Emin Pasha in Central Africa, being a Collection of his Letters and Journals* (London, 1888), pp. 88 *sq.* According to this account, the potion was made from red wood, and the ordeal went by the same name (*madudu*) as in Uganda.

forests to the west of the southern end of Lake Albert Nyanza, believe that death is always caused by sorcery. Suspicion generally falls on the wives of a deceased man; hence on the death of a husband the widows commonly take to flight. If the suspected witch is apprehended, she must clear herself by the poison ordeal or perish in the attempt. As ordinarily happens, to vomit up the poison is a proof of innocence; to retain it is at once a demonstration of guilt and a cause of death.[1]

The poison ordeal among the Gallas.

The poison ordeal is reported to be in vogue also among the Gallas of Eastern Africa, a race entirely distinct from the Bantus; but particulars with regard to the poison employed and the mode of procedure appear to be wanting. Poisonous plants abound in the Galla country, and the venom used for the perpetration of these judicial murders is probably extracted from one of them. Unless the judges favour the accused, the result of the ordeal is generally fatal.[2]

§ 3. *The Poison Ordeal in Madagascar*

The poison ordeal in Madagascar.

The poison used in the ordeal

Many different ordeals were in use among the tribes of Madagascar, but of them all the poison ordeal was the most famous. The poison was derived from the kernel of the fruit of the tagena tree (*Tanghinia venenifera* or *veneneflua*), a small and handsome tree which grows in the warmer parts of the island. Used in small quantities, an extract of the nut acts like an emetic, but in larger doses it is a virulent poison. It was employed chiefly for the detection of infamous crimes, such as witchcraft and treason, when ordinary evidence could not be obtained. The people believed that some supernatural power, a sort of "searcher of hearts," inhered in the fruit, which entered into the suspected person and either proved his innocence or established his guilt. A portion of two kernels was rubbed down in water or in the juice of a banana, and the accused had to drink the infusion, having previously eaten a little rice and

[1] Franz Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika* (Berlin, 1894), pp. 377, 394.

[2] Philipp Paulitschke, *Ethnographie Nordost-Afrikas, die geistige Cultur der Danâkil, Galla und Somâl* (Berlin, 1896), p. 54.

swallowed three small pieces of fowl's skin. After a few minutes tepid water was administered to him to cause vomiting, and if he succeeded in throwing up the three pieces of fowl's skin uninjured, he was deemed innocent. Even when the ordeal was fairly administered, it was dangerous; but often it was employed for the purpose of getting rid of obnoxious persons, and in such cases it could easily be manipulated so as to produce a fatal result. Yet the people retained a firm faith in the supernatural virtue of the ordeal, and often, strong in the consciousness of their innocence, demanded of the authorities to have the poison administered to them for the purpose of clearing their character from every shadow of suspicion. Sometimes the inhabitants of whole villages drank the poison, and the consequent mortality was very great. It was computed that about one-tenth of the population took the poison in the course of their lives, and that upwards of three thousand perished by it every year. As the property of persons convicted by the ordeal was wholly confiscated, part of it falling to the sovereign, part to the judges, and part to the accusers, the pecuniary advantage which a prosecutor reaped from a successful prosecution served as a powerful incentive to base and callous natures to swear away the lives of their innocent fellows; and many people affirmed that the whole institution rested at bottom on the vile passions of avarice and unscrupulous greed.[1]

Faith of the people in the justice of the ordeal.

When a person was accused of sorcery and had to undergo the ordeal, he was taken out of doors and his head was covered with a mat, after which he was led to the house where the ordeal was to take place. Then the official who presided at the trial prayed to the deity named Raimanamango, who was supposed to reside in the egg-shaped fruit of the tangena tree. He said: "Hear, hear, hear, and hearken well, O thou Raimanamango, searcher, trier, or test; thou art a round egg made by God. Though thou hast no eyes, yet thou seest; though thou hast no ears, yet thou hearest; though thou hast no mouth, yet thou answerest:

Form of procedure in the ordeal.

Prayers and curses addressed to the god who resides in the fruit of the poison tree.

[1] Rev. William Ellis, *History of Madagascar* (London, Preface dated 1838), i. 458-487; Rev. James Sibree, *The Great African Island* (London, 1880), pp. 281-283; Ém. Perrot et Ém. Vogt, *Poisons de Flèches et Poisons d'Épreuve* (Paris, 1913), pp. 142 *sqq.*

therefore hear and hearken well, O Raimanamango!" Next, the presiding official solemnly cursed the accused if he should be found guilty of sorcery, saying, "If thou findest that he has the root of sorcery, or the trunk of sorcery, or the leaves of sorcery, then kill him immediately, kill him instantly, let him die forthwith, tear his flesh, wring or twist his bowels, tear them into pieces. For thou, Raimanamango, art God, who wilt not permit sorcerers, that murder people, to live; therefore, if thou findest that he is guilty of sorcery, kill him." Next he cursed the accused if he should have a secret charm or antidote to counteract the effect of the poison, saying, "Now though he flatters himself secure while confiding in these, suffer not thyself, O Tangena, to be conquered by them, for thou art God; therefore, if he is a sorcerer, kill him quickly, kill him immediately, let him die forthwith; kill him without delay, burst him and tear his flesh, and tear his arms into pieces; break his heart, burst his bowels. Oh kill him instantly, kill him in a moment," and so forth. And to provide for the case of the accused proving to be innocent, the god was prayed to as follows: "Therefore, if he be innocent, let him live quickly, preserve his heart without delay; let him greatly rejoice, let him dance and run about merrily, like one who has drunk cold water; let him become like cold water, which is refreshing; let flesh return to him, if thou findest that he has no sorcery or witchcraft to kill persons with. Now, take care then, and forget not to return back through the same door through which I made thee enter into him." The curses which preceded the drinking of the poisoned draught in this Malagasy ordeal may be compared with the curses pronounced by the priest in administering the bitter water of the Hebrew ordeal.

Punishment inflicted on the guilty.

When the accused person failed to establish his innocence by vomiting the three pieces of skin, he was beaten to death with a rice-pestle, strangled, or suffocated, unless the poison had already proved fatal. Sometimes his body was hastily buried, but often it was merely dragged to a distance from the house or village and left a prey to dogs and birds. Many of the victims seem to have been buried or abandoned before life was extinct; for their murderers were

in too great haste to finish their bloody business, escaping from the house as soon as they imagined the spirit to be departing, lest they should encounter it in its flight. Such was the fate reserved for freemen convicted by the ordeal. But slaves found guilty might always be sold, unless they belonged to a member of the royal family, for in that case there was no help for it but they must die. When a member of a family fell ill, all the slaves in the household had often to submit to the ordeal, since they were suspected of causing the sickness by witchcraft. Should the sovereign himself be indisposed, not only his slaves but all persons in personal attendance on him might be compelled to attest their loyalty and innocence by drinking the poison.[1]

Animals employed as proxies in the poison ordeal.

In Madagascar, as in many African tribes, accuser and accused often deputed the painful duty of drinking the poison to two fowls or two dogs, which acted as their proxies; and the guilt or innocence of the principal was decided according to the vomit of his four-footed or feathered deputy. When the dog had swallowed the dose, and the court was anxiously awaiting the infallible verdict, the following solemn prayer was addressed to the poison then working in the animal's stomach: "Hear, hear, hear, and hearken well, O thou Raimanamango. Thou art now within the stomach of the dog, which is the substitute of eyes, life, feet, hands, and ears, for the accused. The dog in whose stomach thou art is thus like him. If thou findest that the accused is not guilty, but is spitefully and maliciously accused, let this dog live quickly; let this dog, which is a substitute for the accused, which has feet and hands like him, live quickly; yea, let this dog, which is his substitute, live quickly; and return back through the same door through which thou hast entered into it, O Raimanamango. But if thou findest that the accused is truly guilty, kill this dog, whose eyes, life, feet, hands, etc., are his substitute, without delay kill it quickly—destroy it

[1] Rev. William Ellis, *History of Madagascar*, i. 463-472, 477-479; James Cameron, "On the Early Inhabitants of Madagascar," *The Antananarivo Annual and Madagascar Magazine, Reprint of the First Four Numbers* (Antananarivo, 1885), pp. 260 *sq.* In the text I have much abridged the long formula of adjuration as it is reported by Ellis. Even that report, which fills between five and six pages, is said to be only a summary of the original, which was four or five times as long.

instantly—burst its heart—tear it and kill it immediately, O Raimanamango." [1]

§ 4. *The Poison Ordeal in India*

Judicial ordeals sanctioned by Indian law.

Apart from its prevalence in Africa and Madagascar the poison ordeal seems to have had a very limited range in the world. It has been practised, however, in India from time immemorial. Ancient Indian lawgivers record it along with other kinds of ordeal which were employed according to circumstances, and in modern times native writers on Indian law have recognized its validity.[2] Thus in the latter part of the eighteenth century a certain Ali Ibrahim Khan, Chief Magistrate of Benares, laid down the traditionary doctrine on the subject as follows:—

"The modes of trying offenders by an appeal to the deity, which are described at large in the *Mitácsherá*, or Comment on the *Dherma Sástra*, in the *Chapter of Oaths*, and other ancient books of Hindu law, are here sufficiently explained, according to the interpretation of learned Pandits, by the well-wisher to mankind, Ali Ibrahim Khan.

"The word *Divya*, in Sanscrit, signifies the same with *Parícshà*, , or *Parikhyà*, in *Bháshà*, *Kasam*, in Arabick, and *Saucand* in Persian; that is, *an oath*; or the form of invoking the Supreme Being to attest the truth of an allegation; but it is generally understood to mean the trial by *ordeal*, or the form of appealing to the immediate interposition of the Divine Power.

Various kinds of ordeal.

"Now this trial may be conducted in nine ways. First, by the balance; secondly, by fire; thirdly, by water; fourthly,

[1] Rev. William Ellis, *History of Madagascar*, i. 479 *sq.*

[2] On ordeals generally in India, see Ali Ibráhim Khan, "On the Trial by Ordeal among the Hindus," *Asiatick Researches*, vol. i. Fifth Edition (London, 1806), pp. 389-404; J. A. Dubois, *Mœurs, Institutions et Cérémonies des Peuples de l'Inde* (Paris, 1825), ii. 546-554; A. F. Stenzler, "Die Indischen Gottesurtheile," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, ix. (1855) pp. 661-682; Emil Schlagintweit, *Die Gottesurtheile der Inder* (Munich, 1866); George Bühler, "A translation of the Chapter on Ordeals, from the *Vyávahára* of Mayukha," *Journal of the Asiatic Sotiety of Bengal*, xxxv. Part i. (Calcutta, 1867) pp. 14-49; Julius Jolly, *Recht und Sitte* (Strasburg, 1896), pp. 144-146 (in G. Bühler's *Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde*); Edgar Thurston, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* (Madras, 1906), pp. 421 *sqq.*

by poison; fifthly, by the *Cosha*, or water in which an idol has been washed; sixthly, by rice; seventhly, by boiling oil; eighthly, by red-hot iron; ninthly, by images. . . .

The poison ordeal.

"There are two sorts of trial by poison. First, the Pandits having performed their *hóma*, and the person accused his ablution, two *retti's* and a half, or seven barley-corns, of *vishanága*, a poisonous root, or of *sanc'hyá* (that is, white arsenick) are mixed in eight *másha's*, or sixty-four *retti's*, of clarified butter, which the accused must eat from the hand of a Bráhman. If the poison produce no visible effect, he is absolved; otherwise, condemned. Secondly, the hooded snake, called *nága*, is thrown into a deep earthen pot, into which is dropped a ring, a seal, or a coin. This the person accused is ordered to take out with his hand; and if the serpent bite him, he is pronounced guilty; if not, innocent.

The *Cósha* ordeal.

"Trial by the *Cósha* is as follows: The accused is made to drink three draughts of the water in which the images of the Sun, of Dévi, and other deities, have been washed for that purpose; and if within fourteen days he has any sickness or indisposition, his crime is considered as proved."[1]

The Laws of Vishnu on the poison ordeal.

The ancient Indian lawbook which passes under the name of Vishnu, but which in its final form can hardly be earlier than about the year 200 A.D.,[2] recognizes and describes the ordeals by the balance, by fire, by water, by poison, and by sacred libation, that is, by drinking water in which the images of gods have been dipped.[3] The rules which the code lays down for the administration of the poison ordeal are as follows:—

"All (other) sorts of poison must be avoided (in administering this ordeal), except poison from the *Sriṅga* tree, which grows on the Himalayas. (Of that) the judge must give seven grains, mixed with clarified butter, to the defendant. If the poison is digested easily, without violent symptoms, he shall recognise him as innocent, and dismiss him at the

[1] "On the Trial by Ordeal among the Hindus," by Ali Ibrahim Khan, Chief Magistrate at Banares, communicated by Warren Hastings, Esq., *Asiatick Researches*, vol. i. Fifth Edition (London, 1806), pp. 389, 391.

[2] A. A. Macdonell, in *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, The Indian Empire* (Oxford, 1909), ii. 262.

[3] *The Institutes of Vishnu*, translated by Julius Jolly (Oxford, 1880), chapters ix.-xiv. pp. 52-61 (*The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. vii.).

end of the day." And while the judge administered the poison to the defendant, he was to recite the following prayer: "On account of thy venomous and dangerous nature thou art destruction to all living creatures; thou, O poison, knowest what mortals do not comprehend. This man being arraigned in a cause, desires to be cleared from guilt. Therefore mayest thou deliver him lawfully from this perplexity."[1] But the poison ordeal might not be administered to lepers, bilious persons, and Brahmans, nor might recourse be had to it during the rainy season.[2]

Prayer addressed to the poison.

And in regard to the administration of the ordeal by sacred libation, the same code lays down the following rules:—

The ordeal of the sacred libation.

"Having invoked terrible deities (such as Durgâ, the Âdityas or others, the defendant) must drink three handfuls of water in which (images of) those deities have been bathed, uttering at the same time the words, 'I have not done this,' with his face turned towards the deity (in question). He to whom (any calamity) happens within a fortnight or three weeks (such as an illness, or fire, or the death of a relative, or a heavy visitation by the king), should be known to be guilty; otherwise (if nothing adverse happens to him), he is freed from the charge. A just king should honour (with presents of clothes, ornaments, etc.) one who has cleared himself from guilt by an ordeal."[3]

This account of the poison ordeal, as it was practised in antiquity, is supplemented by other ancient authorities. Thus according to the lawgiver Nârada, the poison was to be administered by a Brahman fasting, with his face turned to the north or east, and the quantity of poison in the dose should vary with the season. In the cold season the amount should be seven barleycorns, in the hot season five, in the rainy season four, and in autumn three;[4] which seems to

Other ancient Indian accounts of the poison ordeal.

1. *The Institutes of Vishnu*, translated by Julius Jolly, chapter xiii. p. 60. If the *Sriñga* was the *Aconitum*, as seems probable (see below, p. 409), it is incorrectly described in the text as a tree; it is a herb, as Sir David Prain reminds me.

2. *The Institutes of Vishnu*, translated by Julius Jolly, chapter ix. 27, 28, p. 55.

3. *The Institutes of Vishnu*, translated by Julius Jolly, chapter xiv. pp. 60 *sq.*

4. George Bühler, "A translation of the Chapter on Ordeals, from the *Vyávahára* of Mayukha," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, xxxv. Part i. (Calcutta, 1867) pp. 42 *sq.*

imply that in the opinion of the ancients the virulence of the poison varied with the season, so that at certain times of the year a smaller dose sufficed to produce the same effect which at other times could only be brought about by a larger. According to the lawgiver Kâtyâyana, the poison should be given in the forenoon in a cool place, mixed with thirty times as much clarified butter, well pounded. Nârada prescribed that the person who had drunk the poison should sit down in the shade and be watched for the rest of the day, without being allowed to eat food.[1] The lawgiver Pitâmaha recommended that in order to prevent fraud the accused should be carefully guarded for three or five days before the ordeal, lest he should take drugs or practise charms and enchantments which might counteract and annul the effect of the poison.[2] According to one account, which claimed the authority of the lawgiver Nârada, the effect of the full dose of poison was only to be observed in the space of time during which the judge could clap his hands five hundred times; while the rule that the accused was to be kept under observation for the rest of the day applied only to cases in which smaller quantities of the poison had been administered.[3] The symptoms produced by the drinking of the poison are thus described in the *Vishatantra*: "The first attack of the poison causes the erection of the hair (on the body), (then follow) sweat and dryness of the mouth, after that arise (frequent) changes of colour, and trembling of the body. Then the fifth attack causes the immobility of the eyes, loss of speech, and hiccoughing. The sixth, hard breathing and loss of consciousness, and the seventh, the death of the person."[4] According to Yâjnavalkya, the person who was about to undergo the ordeal prayed to the poison as follows: "O poison, thou art Brahman's son, firm in the duty of (making known the) truth, save me, according to truth, from this accusation; become ambrosia to me."[5] According to a modern authority, the priest who administers

Prayer addressed to the poison.

[1] George Bühler, *op. cit.* p. 43.

[2] A. F. Stenzler, "Die Indischen Gottesurtheile," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, ix. (1855) p. 675.

[3] A. F. Stenzler, *op. cit.* pp. 674 *sq.*; Emil Schlagintweit, *Die Gottesurtheile der Indier* (Munich, 1866), p 30; G. Bühler, *op. cit.* p. 43.

[4] G. Bühler, *op. cit.* p. 43.

[5] G. Bühler, *op. cit.* p. 43; E. Schlagintweit, *Die Gottesurtheile der Indier*, p. 29.

the ordeal addresses the poison in the following terms: "Poison, thou art a maleficent substance, created to destroy guilty or impure creatures; thou wert vomited by the great serpent Bashooky to cause the guilty giants to perish. Here is a person accused of an offence of which he professes to be innocent. If he is really not guilty, strip thyself of thy maleficent properties in his favour, and become nectar for him." And according to the same authority the proof of innocence consists in surviving the drinking of the poison for three days.[1]

The poison employed in the Indian ordeal seems to be an aconite.

All the ancient lawgivers seem to agree in prescribing the poison of the *sṛiṅga* as the proper one for use in the ordeal, though two of them, namely Kâtyâyana and Pitâmaha, permitted the employment of the *vatsanâbha* also for that purpose.[2] The *sṛiṅga* is said to be the root of one of the poisonous Himalayan species of *Aconitum*, generally referred to as *Aconitum ferox*, which is found in the Himalayas to a considerable height. The venom resides in the root, and is as dangerous when applied to a wound as when taken internally. Hence all along the Himalayas, before the introduction of fire-arms, the poison used to be smeared on arrows; and the wild tribes of the Brahmaputra valley, such as the Abors, Daphlas, and Akas, employed it in war as well as in hunting tigers. The natives believe that even the exhalation of the plant has power to poison the air, and the Gurkhas allege that by means of it they could so infect the rivers and springs that no enemy would be able to penetrate into their country.[3]

[1] J. A. Dubois, *Mœurs, Institutions et Cérémonies des Peuples de l'Inde* (Paris, 1825), ii. 554. The Arab geographer and scholar Albiruni, whose work on India was written about 1030 A.D., gives an account of the ordeals as they were then practised in the country. But his description of the poison ordeal is slight and vague. See *Alberuni's India*, an English Edition with Notes and Indices by Dr. Edward C. Sachau (London, 1888), ii. 159 *sq.*

[2] A. F. Stenzler, *op. cit.* p. 674.

[3] E. Schlagintweit, *op. cit.* p. 29, note [43]; L. A. Waddell, "Note on the Poisoned Arrows of the Akas," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxiv. (1895) p. 57; Ém. Perrot et Ém. Vogt, *Poisons de Flèches et Poisons d'Épreuve* (Paris, 1913), pp. 167 *sqq.* According to E. Schlagintweit (*l.c.*) and Messrs. Perrot and Vogt the Naga tribes of Assam also use poisoned arrows, but this is doubted by Sir David Prain, who lived among them. He writes to me that the Nagas whom he knew did not employ arrows, and that he believes the whole people to be ignorant of the use of aconite as a poison. On the other hand, in his monograph on the Naga tribes of Manipur, Mr. T. C. Hodson writes

§ 5. *The Geographical Diffusion of the Poison Ordeal*

The poison ordeal seemingly confined to Africa, Madagascar, and India.

Outside of Africa, Madagascar, and India, so far as I am aware, the use of poisons in judicial ordeals has not been recorded.[1] It appears to be unknown in the Malay regions and Polynesia, and its absence in these quarters becomes all the more remarkable when we remember its prevalence in Madagascar, since the Malagasy belong to the same stock as the Malays and Polynesians. The natural inference appears to be that the Malagasy did not import the practice when they first migrated to their present island home, but that they borrowed it at some subsequent time either from India or, more probably perhaps, from Africa. As the Sakalavas, who occupy a large part of Madagascar, are almost pure Bantu negroes, the immigrants could easily have learned the custom from them, whether they found these negroes already in possession of the island or afterwards introduced them from the neighbouring continent.[2] In Java disputes as to the boundaries of lands are sometimes settled by an appeal to an ordeal which bears a superficial resemblance to those which we have been considering. The claimant is required to eat some product of the land to which he alleges a claim; if the land really belongs to him,

that "the weapons of offence in common use throughout the hills are the spear, the dao, and the bow and arrow"; and he adds, "It is said that the Southern Tangkhuls used poisoned arrows. If this is true they may have been borrowed from the Marrings, who use a vegetable extract." See T. C. Hodson, *The Nāga Tribes of Manipur* (London, 1911), pp. 35, 36. While Sir David Prain's testimony may be accepted as conclusive in regard to the particular tribes among whom he lived, it is possible that other tribes of the group may be acquainted both with arrows and with the poison of aconite, though the evidence is hardly sufficient to justify us in affirming it. As to the species of aconite which furnishes the poison, Dr. O. Stapf, of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, refers me to his treatise, "The Aconites of India," *Ann. Bot. Gard. Calc.* X. ii. 115 *sqq.*

[1] I cannot agree with my learned and ingenious friend, M. Salomon Reinach, in his attempt to prove the use of a poison ordeal at Rome from a narrative of Livy (viii. 18). See S. Reinach, "Une ordalie par le poison à Rome," *Cultes, Mythes et Religions*, iii. (Paris, 1908) pp. 254 *sqq.*

[2] As to the races of Madagascar, see J. Deniker, *The Races of Man* (London, 1900), pp. 469 *sqq.*; and especially A. Grandidier et G. Grandidier, *Ethnographie de Madagascar*, i. (Paris, 1908) pp. 1 *sqq.* The latter writers, who are the highest authorities on the subject, hold that the great bulk of the Malagasy are of Indo-Melanesian origin, and have been but little affected by African influence.

the food will do him no harm, but if it does not, he will swell up and burst. The writer who mentions the custom, adds that this is the only instance he has found among Malayo-Polynesian peoples of an ordeal like the poison ordeal of Africa.[1]

§ 6. *The Meaning of the Poison Ordeal*

The use of the poison ordeal seems based on a theory that the poison is a personal and intelligent being, who can detect and punish crime in the person of the criminal.

The practice of the poison ordeal appears to be based on a theory that the poison is an animated and intelligent being, who, on entering the stomach of the accused person, readily detects the symptoms of his guilt or innocence and kills or spares him accordingly. This personification of the poison is plainly assumed in the prayers which are addressed to it in India, Madagascar, and some parts of Africa,[2] and it is further indicated by the ceremonies which sometimes accompany the act of procuring the poisonous bark from the tree.[3] The same ascription of superhuman knowledge to the poison comes out also in the belief that, when the drug does not kill the drinker, it confers on him the power of divination, in virtue of which he is able to detect and expose the guilty witch or wizard.[4] On the same theory we can perhaps explain why persons who undergo the ordeal are commonly regarded as innocent if they vomit the poison, but guilty if they either retain it or discharge it by evacuation of the bowels. As an intelligent being, the poison is apparently supposed to quit the body of the accused as soon as, by ocular inspection of the man or woman's interior, he is satisfied of his or her innocence, and in that case he takes his departure by the same door by which he entered the body, namely by the mouth, thus retracing his steps and thereby acknowledging that his services as an executioner were not wanted.[5] But should he on the contrary discover in the culprit's stomach the

[1] C. J. Leendertz, "Godsoordeelen en Eeden," *Tijdschrift van het Kon. Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, Tweede Serie, v. Afdeeling: Meer uitgebreide artikelen (Leyden, 1888), p. 19.

[2] Above, pp. 364, 402 *sq.*, 404 *sq.*, 407, 408 *sq.*; compare pp. 340, 401.

[3] Above, pp. 357, 358, 383.

[4] Above, pp. 344 *sq.*

[5] We have seen (above, pp. 403, 404), that in Madagascar the poison was adjured, in case it found the accused guiltless, to return back through the same door by which it had entered his body.

clear evidence of guilt, which is supposed to exist there in a material shape, he either remains in the person of the criminal for the purpose of killing him or her, or quits it by a different channel from that by which he effected his entrance, thus implicitly passing sentence of condemnation on the accused, since he has failed to pronounce an acquittal by retracing his steps.

Guilt ejected in a material shape from the body of the criminal.

While this is perhaps the general theory of the poison ordeal, it seems in some cases to be either combined or confused with a notion that in vomiting the poison the culprit simultaneously rids himself of his guilt, which comes out of him in a material form and can be discovered in his vomit. That apparently is why sometimes the evil principle or evil spirit is exhorted to come out from the accused,[1] and why sometimes the vomit of the alleged witch or wizard is scrutinized for evidence of his or her guilt.[2]

§ 7. *The Drinking of the Written Curse*

The bitter water of the Hebrew ordeal was seemingly innocuous and derived its force only from the superstitious fears of the guilty.

It must apparently remain doubtful whether the bitter water of the Hebrew ordeal contained any poisonous ingredients or derived its supposed virtues purely from the dust of the sanctuary, with which it was mixed, and from the curses which were pronounced over it and washed off into it. If it was really, as seems probable, innocuous in itself and deleterious only through the superstitious fears which it excited in the mind of the guilty woman who drank it, the imaginary powers which it was supposed to acquire from the dust of the sanctuary may be compared with the imaginary powers which in Africa and India the water of the ordeal has sometimes been thought to acquire either from the sacred earth with which it is mixed or from the images of the gods which have been dipped in it.[3] In all such cases superstition comes to the aid of morality, and supplies the material vehicle of justice with that punitive force which on purely physical principles is lacking.

The written curses washed off into the bitter water.

Whatever may have been the actual composition of the bitter water, there can be no doubt that the ceremony of

[1] Above, p. 362. [2] Above, pp. 324, 327, 340, 359.
[3] Above, pp. 319, 320 *sq.*, 406, 407.

washing off the written curses into it, and then giving the water to the accused woman to drink, was a superstition pure and simple, which could not possibly produce the supposed effect on an adulteress, while it left a faithful wife unharmed. The notion, that the magical influence of a written charm, whether for good or evil, can be communicated to any person by making him or her drink the water into which the characters have been washed off, is widespread among superstitious people at the present time and has no doubt been so since the days of antiquity. In Senegambia a native Mohammedan doctor will write passages of the Koran in Arabic characters on a wooden board, wash off the characters in water, and then give the infusion to the patient to drink, who thus absorbs the blessed influence of the holy words through the vehicle of the dirty water.[1] In Morocco a person who desires to secure the love of another, will buy of a priest a love-charm written on paper, soak the paper in water, and give the water to be drunk by the unsuspecting object of his or her affection, who is expected to conceive a passion accordingly for the charmer.[2] In North Africa a doctor will write his magical formula on a cake of barley or on onion peel, and give his patient the cake or the peel to eat. Sometimes he will write the words on the bottom of a plate, efface the writing, and then cause the sufferer to eat out of the plate. Eggs are often employed for the same purpose. The prescription, or rather the spell, is scrawled on the shell of an egg; the egg is then boiled and eaten by the sick person, who is supposed to benefit by the magical virtue thus infused into his body.[3] Similarly in Egypt the most approved mode of charming away sickness or disease is to write certain passages of the Koran on the inner surface of an earthenware cup or bowl, then to pour in some water, stir it until the writing is quite washed off, and finally to let the patient gulp down the water, to which the sacred words, with all their beneficent power, have been transferred by

Common practice of drinking as a charm the water into which written characters have been washed off. The practice in Africa.

The practice in Egypt.

[1] L. J. B. Bérenger-Féraud, *Les Peuplades de la Sénégambie* (Paris, 1879), p. 69; L. Austine Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet* (London, 1895), p. 401, note 2.

[2] Arthur Leared, *Morocco and the Moors* (London, 1876), p. 272.

[3] Edmond Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1908), p. 109.

The practice in Madagascar.

this simple process.[1] Among the descendants of Arab immigrants in South-Eastern Madagascar, when a person was ill, it used to be custom to write prayers in Arabic characters on a piece of paper, steep the paper in water, and give the water to the patient to drink.[2]

The practice in Tibet, China, Annam, and Japan.

To eat a paper on which a charm has been written is a common cure for disease in Tibet; and a more refined, yet equally effective, way of ensuring the same happy result is to reflect the writing on a mirror, wash the mirror, and give the washings to the sufferer to imbibe.[3] So in China spells " are used as cures for sick persons, by being either written on leaves which are then infused in some liquid, or inscribed on paper, burned, and the ashes thrown into drink, which the patient has to swallow."[4] In Annam the priests are in possession of diverse cabalistic signs, which they similarly employ, according to circumstances, for the cure of diverse diseases. For example, if a man suffers from colic, accompanied by inflammation of the bowels, the priest will paint the corresponding signs in red letters on yellow paper, burn the paper, and throw the ashes into a bowl of cold water, which he will give the patient to drink. In the case of other diseases the paper will be red and the signs black, but the manner and the efficacity of the cure will be identical.[5] In Japan it is said to have been customary in some cases to cause an accused person to drink water in which a paper, inscribed with certain peculiar characters, had been steeped, and it was believed that the water thus tinctured would torment the culprit in his inward parts till he confessed his guilt.[6]

The bitter water reinforced by the written curses.

With these parallels before us we can fully understand, even if we cannot entirely believe, the powerful accession of force which the bitter water of the Hebrews was supposed to receive from the curses pronounced over it and washed into it by the officiating priest.

[1] E. W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (Paisley and London, 1895), p. 263.

[2] G. Grandidier, "La Mort et les Funérailles à Madagascar," *L'Anthropologie*, xxiii. (Paris, 1912) p. 321.

[3] L. Austine Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet* (London, 1895), p. 401.

[4] John Francis Davis, *The Chinese* (London, 1845), ii. 215.

[5] E. Diguet, *Les Annamites, Société, Coutumes, Religions* (Paris, 1906), p. 282.

[6] Adolph Bastian, *Der Mensch in der Geschichte* (Leipsic, 1860), ii. 211.

CHAPTER VI

THE OX THAT GORED

In the Pentateuch it is ordained that an animal which has killed a man shall be put to death.

IN the Book of the Covenant, the oldest code of laws embodied in the Pentateuch,[1] it is laid down that "if an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die, the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. But if the ox were wont to gore in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death."[2] In the much later Priestly Code[3] the rule regulating the punishment of homicidal animals is stated more comprehensively as part of the general law of blood-revenge which was revealed by God to Noah after the great flood: "And surely your blood, the blood of your lives, will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of man, even at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."[4]

The precept as a part of the general law of blood-revenge.

The principle of blood-revenge has been carried out in the same rigorous manner by savage tribes; indeed some of them have pushed the principle of retaliation yet further by destroying even inanimate objects which have accidentally caused the death of human beings. For example, the Kookies or Kukis of Chittagong, in North-Eastern India, "like all savage people, are of a most vindictive disposition; blood must always be shed for blood; if a tiger even kills any of them, near a village, the whole tribe is up in arms, and goes in pursuit of the animal; when, if he is killed, the

The principle of blood-revenge extended by the Kukis of Chittagong to animals and trees.

[1] See above, pp. 99 *sq.*
[2] Exodus, xxi. 28 *sq.*
[3] See above, pp. 108 *sqq.*
[4] Genesis, ix. 5 *sq.*

family of the deceased gives a feast of his flesh, in revenge of his having killed their relation. And should the tribe fail to destroy the tiger, in this first general pursuit of him, the family of the deceased must still continue the chace; for until they have killed either this, or some other tiger, and have given a feast of his flesh, they are in disgrace in the village, and not associated with by the rest of the inhabitants. In like manner, if a tiger destroys one of a hunting party, or of a party of warriors on an hostile excursion, neither the one nor the other (whatever their success may have been) can return to the village, without being disgraced, unless they kill the tiger. A more striking instance still of this revengeful spirit of retaliation is, that if a man should happen to be killed by an accidental fall from a tree, all his relations assemble, and cut it down; and however large it may be, they reduce it to chips, which they scatter in the winds, for having, as they say, been the cause of the death of their brother."[1]

The Ainos of Japan cut down a tree which has fallen on and killed a man.

Similarly the Ainos or Ainu, a primitive people of Japan, take vengeance on any tree from which a person has fallen and been killed. When such an accident happens, "the people become quite angry, and proceed to make war upon the tree. They assemble and perform a certain ceremony which they call *niokeush rorumbe*. Upon asking about this matter the Ainu said: 'Should a person climb a tree and then fall out of it and die, or should a person cut the tree down and the tree fall upon him and kill him, such a death is called *niokeush*, and it is caused by the multitude of demons inhabiting the various parts of the trunk, and branches and leaves. The people ought therefore to meet together, cut the tree down, divide it up into small pieces and scatter them to the winds. For unless that tree be destroyed it will always remain dangerous, the

[1] John Macrae, "Account of the Kookies of Lunctas," *Asiatic Researches*, vii. (London, 1803) pp. 189 *sq.* In quoting this passage I have substituted the word "village" for the word *Parah*, which means the same thing. "The Kookies choose the steepest and most inaccessible hills to build their villages upon, which, from being thus situated, are called *Parahs*, or, in the Kookie language, *K'hooah*. Every *Parah* consists of a tribe, and has seldom fewer than four or five hundred inhabitants, and sometimes contains one or two thousand" (J. Macrae, *op. cit.* p. 186). The Kookie law of blood-revenge is briefly mentioned by A. Bastian (*Völkerstämme am Brahmaputra*, Berlin, 1883, p. 35), who apparently follows Macrae.

demons continuing to inhabit it. But if the tree is too large to be cut up fine, it may be left there, the place being clearly marked, so that people may not go near it.'"[1] Among the aborigines of Western Victoria the spear or other weapon of an enemy which had killed a friend was always burnt by the relatives of the deceased.[2] Similarly some of the natives of Western Australia used to burn the point of a spear which had killed a man; and they explained the custom by saying that the soul of the slain man adhered to the point of the weapon and could only depart to its proper place when that point had been burnt.[3] When a murder has been committed among the Akikuyu of British East Africa, the elders take the spear or sword with which the crime was perpetrated, beat it quite blunt, and then throw it into a deep pool in the nearest river. They say that if they omitted to do so the weapon would continue to be the cause of murder.[4] To the same effect a writer who has personally investigated some of the tribes of British East Africa tells us that "the weapon which has destroyed human life is looked upon with awe and dread. Having once caused death it retains an evil propensity to carry death with it for ever. Among the Akikuyu and Atheraka, therefore, it is blunted and buried by the elders. The Akamba pursue a different method, more typical of their crafty character. The belief among them is that the arrow which has killed a man can never lose its fateful spirit, which abides with the one who possesses it. The bow also is possessed of the same spirit, and hence as soon as a Mkamba[5] has killed any one he will induce another by deceitful means to take it. The arrow is at first in possession of the relatives of the person killed; they will extract it from the wound and hide it at night near the murderer's

Weapons which have killed people are destroyed, rendered useless, or thrown away by some savages.

[1] Rev. John Batchelor, *The Ainu and their Folk-lore* (London, 1901), pp. 384 *sq.*

[2] James Dawson, *Australian Aborigines* (Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide, 1881), p. 53.

[3] Rudesimo Salvado, *Mémoires historiques sur l'Australie*, traduits de l'Italien en Français par l'Abbé Falcimagne (Paris, 1854), pp. 260 *sq.*, 336; "A Benedictine Missionary's Account of the Natives of Australia and Oceania," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, vii. (1878) p. 289.

[4] C. W. Hobley, "Further Researches into Kikuyu and Kamba Religious Beliefs and Customs," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xli. (1911) p. 424.

[5] Mkamba is the singular form of Akamba, the plural.

village. The people there make search for it, and, if found, either return it to the other village, or lay it somewhere on a path, in the hopes that some passer-by will pick it up and thus transfer to himself the curse. But people are wary of such finds, and thus mostly possession of the arrow remains with the murderer."[1]

River which has drowned a man punished by the Kachins of Burma.

The Kakhyens, Kachins, or Chingpaws of Upper Burma are said never to forget an injury. A dying father bequeaths to his sons the duty of avenging his wrongs, and the sons bide their time till they can obey the paternal behest. Generally old scores are settled once a year, and on such occasions even inanimate objects are remembered and requited. For example, if a friend or relative has been drowned in crossing a river, the avenger repairs once a year to the banks of the stream, and filling a bamboo vessel with the water, he hews it through, as if he were despatching a living foe.[2]

Buffaloes which have killed people are put to death in Malacca and Celebes.

In the Malay code of Malacca there is a section dealing with vicious buffaloes and cattle, and herein it is ordained that "if the animal be tied in the forest, in a place where people are not in the habit of passing, and there gore anybody to death, it shall be put to death."[3] Among the Bare'e-speaking Toradjas of Central Celebes "blood-revenge extends to animals: a buffalo that has killed a man must be put to death."[4] This is natural enough, for "the Toradja conceives an animal to differ from a man only in outward appearance. The animal cannot speak, because its beak or snout is different from the mouth of a man; the animal runs on all fours, because its hands (fore-paws) are different from human hands; but the inmost nature of the animal is the same as that of a man. If a crocodile kills somebody, the family of the victim may thereupon kill a crocodile, that is to say, the murderer or some member of his family; but if more

[1] Hon. Charles Dundas, "The Organization and Laws of some Bantu Tribes in East Africa," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xlv. (1915) pp. 269 *sq.* Compare *id.*, "History of Kitui," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xliii. (1913) p. 526.

[2] Clement Williams, *Through Burma to Western China* (Edinburgh and London, 1868), pp. 91 *sq.* I have already cited this latter custom in a different connexion (vol. ii. p. 421).

[3] T. J. Newbold, *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca* (London, 1839), ii. 257.

[4] N. Adriani en Alb. C. Kruijt, *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes* (Batavia, 1912–1914), i. 182.

crocodiles than men are killed, then the right of revenge reverts to the crocodiles, and they are sure to exercise their right on somebody or other. If a dog does not receive his share of the game, he will refuse next time to join in the hunt, because he feels himself aggrieved. The Toradja is much more sensible than we are of the rights of animals; in particular he deems it highly dangerous to make fun of a beast. He would utter a lively protest and predict heavy storms and floods of rain if, for instance, he saw anybody dress up an ape in human clothes. And nobody can laugh at a cat or dog with impunity."[1] Among the Bogos, a tribe on the northern outskirts of Abyssinia, a bull, or a cow, or any head of cattle that kills a human being is put to death.[2]

Thieving dog hanged in Africa.

At the entrance of a Bayaka village, in the valley of the Congo, Mr. Torday saw a roughly constructed gallows, on which hung a dead dog. He learned that as a notorious thief, who had been in the habit of making predatory raids among the fowls, the animal had been strung up to serve as a public example.[3]

Arab treatment of an animal that has killed a man.

Among the Arabs of Arabia Petraea, when an animal has killed a man, its owner must drive it away, crying after it "Scabby, scabby!" He may never afterwards recover possession of the beast, under pain of being compelled to pay the bloodwit for the homicide committed by the brute. Should the death have been caused by a sheep or a goat in a flock, as by sending a heavy stone hurtling down a steep slope, but the particular animal which set the stone rolling be unknown, then the whole flock must be driven away with the cry, "Away from us, ye scabby ones!"[4]

Punishment of a worrying dog decreed in the *Zend-Avesta*.

Similar principles of retributive justice were recognized in antiquity by other nations than the Jews. In the *Zend-Avesta*, the ancient lawbook of the Persians, it is laid down that if "the mad dog, or the dog that bites without barking, smite a sheep or wound a man, the dog shall pay for it as for wilful murder. If the dog shall smite a sheep or wound a man, they shall cut off his right ear. If he shall smite

[1] N. Adriani en Alb. C. Kruijt, *op. cit.* iii. 394 *sq.*

[2] Werner Munzinger, *Sitten und Recht der Bogos* (Winterthur, 1859), p. 83.

[3] E. Torday, *Camp and Tramp in African Wilds* (London, 1913), p. 142.

[4] Alois Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, iii. (Vienna, 1908), p. 368.

another sheep or wound another man, they shall cut off his left ear. If he shall smite a third sheep or wound a third man, they shall cut off his right foot. If he shall smite a fourth sheep or wound a fourth man, they shall cut off his left foot. If he shall for the fifth time smite a sheep or wound a man, they shall cut off his tail. Therefore they shall tie him to the post; by the two sides of the collar they shall tie him. If they shall not do so, and the mad dog, or the dog that bites without barking, smite a sheep or wound a man, he shall pay for it as for wilful murder."[1] It will be generally admitted that in this enactment the old Persian lawgiver treats a worrying dog with great forbearance; for he gives him no less than five distinct chances of reforming his character before he exacts from the irreclaimable culprit the extreme penalty of the law.

Trial of animals and inanimate objects in the court of the town-hall (*prytaneum*) at Athens.

At Athens, the very heart of ancient civilization in its finest efflorescence, there was a court specially set apart for the trial of animals and of lifeless objects which had injured or killed human beings. The court sat in the town-hall, (*prytaneum*), and the judges were no less than the titular king of all Attica and the four titular kings of the separate Attic tribes. As the town-hall was in all probability the oldest political centre in Athens, if we except the fortress of the Acropolis, whose precipitous crags and frowning battlements rose immediately behind the law-court, and as the titular tribal kings represented the old tribal kings who bore sway for ages before the inhabitants of Attica overthrew the monarchical and adopted the republican form of government,[2] we are justified in assuming that the court held in this venerable building, and presided over by these august judges, was of extreme antiquity; and the conclusion is confirmed by the nature of the cases which here came up for judgment, since to find complete parallels to them we have had to go to the rude justice of savage tribes in the wilds of India, Africa, and Celebes. The offenders who were here placed at the bar were not men and women, but animals

[1] *The Zend-Avesta*, part. i. *The Vendîdâd*, translated by James Darmesteter (Oxford, 1880), pp. 159 *sq.* (Fargard, xiii. 5. 31-34) (*The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. iv.).

[2] On this subject I may refer to my article, "The Prytaneum, the Temple of Vesta, the Vestals, Perpetual Fires," *The Journal of Philology*, xiv. (1885) pp. 145 *sqq.*

and implements or missiles of stone, wood, or iron which had fallen upon and cracked somebody's crown, when the hand which had hurled them was unknown. What was done to the animals which were found guilty, we do not know; but we are told that lifeless objects, which had killed anybody by falling on him or her, were banished by the tribal kings beyond the boundaries.[1] Every year the axe or the knife which had been used to slaughter an ox at a festival of Zeus on the Acropolis was solemnly tried for murder before the judges seated on the bench of justice; every year it was solemnly found guilty, condemned, and cast into the sea.[2] To ridicule the Athenian passion for sitting on juries, the comic poet Aristophanes has described in one of his plays a crazy old juryman trying a dog, with all legal formalities, for stealing and eating a cheese.[3] Perhaps the idea of the famous scene, which was copied by Racine in his only comedy, *Les Plaideurs*, may have occurred to the Athenian poet as he whiled away an idle hour among the spectators in the court-house, watching with suppressed amusement the trial of a canine, bovine, or asinine prisoner at the bar charged with maliciously and feloniously biting, goring, kicking, or otherwise assaulting a burgess of Athens.

The trial and punishment of animals and inanimate objects recommended by Plato in *The Laws*.

Strangely enough the great philosopher of idealism, Plato himself, cast the mantle of his authority over these quaint relics of a barbarous jurisprudence by proposing to incorporate them in the laws of that ideal state which he

[1] Demosthenes, *Contra Aristocratem*, 76, p. 654 (*Or.* xxiii.); Aeschines, *Contra Ctesiph.* p. 636, § 244; Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, 57; Julius Pollux, *Onomasticon*, viii. 90, 120; Pausanias, i. 28. 10, vi. 11. 6. Aristotle, or rather the author of the *Constitution of Athens*, is the only ancient writer who mentions that animals were tried in the court of the Prytaneum. It is from him and Pollux that we learn the dignity of the judges who presided over the courts. According to Pausanias (vi. 11. 6) the practice of trying and punishing inanimate objects for the accidental deaths of human beings was introduced at Athens by Draco; but for the reasons indicated in the text we may assume the custom to be very much older than the time of that legislator.

[2] Pausanias i. 24. 4, i. 28. 10; Porphyry, *De Abstinentia*, ii. 29 *sq.*; Aelian, *Var. Hist.* viii. 3. According to Pausanias it was the axe which was tried and condemned; according to Porphyry and Aelian it was the knife. For more details I may refer the reader to *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, ii. 4 *sq.* (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part v.).

[3] Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 835-1082.

projected towards the end of his life. Yet it must be confessed that, when he came to compose *The Laws*, the tremulous hand of the aged artist had lost much of its cunning, and that, large as is the canvas on which his latest picture is painted, its colours pale beside the visionary glories of *The Republic*. Few books bear more visibly impressed upon them the traces of faded imaginative splendour and of a genius declined into the vale of years. In this his latest work the sun of Plato shines dimly through the clouds that have gathered thick about its setting. The passage, in which the philosopher proposed to establish a legal procedure modelled on that of the Athenian town-hall, runs as follows:[1] "If a beast of burden or any other animal shall kill any one, except it be while the animal is competing in one of the public games, the relations of the deceased shall prosecute the animal for murder; the judges shall be such overseers of the public lands as the kinsman of the deceased may appoint; and the animal, if found guilty, shall be put to death and cast beyond the boundaries of the country. But if any lifeless object, with the exception of a thunderbolt or any such missile hurled by the hand of God, shall deprive a man of life either by falling on him or through the man's falling on it, the next of kin to the deceased shall, making expiation for himself and all his kin, appoint his nearest neighbour as judge; and the thing, if found guilty, shall be cast beyond the boundaries, as hath been provided in the case of the animals."

The trial and punishment of inanimate objects for homicide in Thasos.

The prosecution of inanimate objects for homicide was not peculiar to Athens in ancient Greece. It was a law of the island of Thasos that any lifeless thing which fell down and killed a person should be brought to trial, and, if found guilty, should be cast into the sea. Now in the middle of the city of Thasos there stood the bronze statue of a celebrated boxer named Theagenes, who in his lifetime had won a prodigious number of prizes in the ring, and whose memory was accordingly cherished by the citizens as one of the most shining ornaments of their native land. However, a certain base fellow, who had a spite at the deceased bruiser, came and thrashed the statue soundly every night. For a time

[1] Plato, *Laws*, ix. 12, pp. 873 D-874 A.

the statue bore this treatment in dignified silence, but at last, unable to put up with it any longer, it toppled over, and, falling flat on its cowardly assailant, crushed him to death. The relations of the slain man took the law of the statue, and indicting it for murder, had it convicted, sentenced, and thrown into the sea.[1] A similar law prevailed, or at all events a similar scruple was felt, concerning homicidal statues at Olympia. One day a little boy was playing there under the bronze image of an ox which stood within the sacred precinct; but suddenly rising up, the little fellow knocked his head against the hard metallic stomach of the animal, and, after lingering a few days, died from the impact. The authorities at Olympia decided to remove the ox from the precincts on the ground that it was guilty of wilful murder; but the Delphic oracle took a more lenient view of the case, and, considering that the statue had acted without malice prepense, brought in a verdict of manslaughter. The verdict was accepted by the authorities, and in compliance with the direction of the oracle they performed over the bronze ox the solemn rites of purification which were customary in cases of involuntary homicide.[2] It is said that when Scipio Africanus died, a statue of Apollo at Rome was so much affected that it wept for three days. The Romans considered this grief excessive, and, acting on the advice of the augurs, they had the too sensitive statue cut up small and sunk into the sea.[3] Nor were animals at Rome always exempted from the last severity of the law. An ancient statute or custom, which tradition ascribed to the royal legislator and reformer Numa, directed that if any man ploughed up a boundary stone, not only he himself but the oxen which had aided and abetted him in the commission of the sacrilege should be sacred to the God of Boundaries;[4] in other words, both the man and his beasts were placed

Statues punished at Olympia and Rome.

Animals punished at Rome.

[1] Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* xxxi. vol. i. p. 377, ed. L. Dindorf (Leipsic, 1857); Pausanias vi. 11. 6; Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelii*, v. 34.

[2] Pausanias v. 27. 10.

[3] Dio Cassius, *Historia Romana*, xxxvi. 84, vol. i. p. 129, ed. L. Dindorf (Leipsic, 1863).

[4] Festus, *De verborum significatione*, ed. C. O. Müller (Leipsic, 1839), p. 368, "*Termino sacro faciebant, quod in ejus tutela fines agrorum esse putabant. Denique Numa Pompilius statuit, eum, qui terminum exarasset, et ipsum et boves sacros esse.*" Compare Dionysius Halicarnasensis, *Antiquit. Roman.* ii. 74, who mentions the outlawry of the human, but not of the bovine, offenders.

outside the pale of the law, and anybody might slay them with impunity.[1]

Trial and punishment of animals on the continent of Europe in modern times.

Such ideas and the practices based on them have not been limited to savage tribes and the civilized peoples of pagan antiquity. On the continent of Europe down to comparatively recent times the lower animals were in all respects considered amenable to the laws. Domestic animals were tried in the common criminal courts, and their punishment on conviction was death; wild animals fell under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts, and the penalty they suffered was banishment or death by exorcism and excommunication. Nor was that penalty by any means a light one, if it be true that St. Patrick exorcized the reptiles of Ireland into the sea or turned them into stones,[2] and that St. Bernard, by excommunicating the flies that buzzed about him, laid them all out dead on the floor of the church.[3] The prerogative of trying domestic animals was built, as on a rock, upon the Jewish law in the Book of the Covenant. In every case advocates were assigned to defend the animals, and the whole proceedings, trial, sentence, and execution, were carried out with the strictest regard for the forms of justice and the majesty of the law. The researches of French antiquaries have brought to light the records of ninety-two processes which were tried in French courts from the twelfth to the eighteenth century. The last victim to suffer in that country under what we may call the Jewish dispensation was a cow, which underwent the extreme penalty of the law in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and forty. On the other hand, the title of the ecclesiastical authorities to exercise jurisdiction over wild

Ecclesiastical jurisdiction over wild animals and vermin.

[1] Festus, *De verborum significatione*, ed. C. O. Müller (Leipsic, 1839), p. 318 *s.v.* "Sacratae leges"; Macrobius, *Saturn.* iii. 7; Dionysius Halicarnasensis, *Antiquit. Roman.* ii. 74; G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*[2] (Munich, 1912), p. 388.

[2] (Sir) Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Second Edition (London, 1873), i. 372. Another Irish saint (St. Yvorus) is said to have cursed and banished rats, and another (St. Nannan) to have operated similarly on fleas. See Giraldus Cambrensis, "Topography of Ireland," chapters xxxi., xxxii., in *The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis*, edited by Thomas Wright (London, 1887), pp. 95 *sq.*

[3] H. H. Milman, *History of Latin Christianity*, iv. (London, 1905), p. 313, note [p]; "Procès contre les Animaux," *La Tradition*, ii. No. 12, 15 Décembre, 1888, p. 363, quoting Sanctus Guillielm Abbas, *Vit. S. Bern.* lib. x. cap. 12.

animals and vermin, such as rats, locusts, caterpillars, and the like, was not altogether, at least at first sight, so perfectly clear and unambiguous on Scriptural grounds, and it had accordingly to be deduced from Holy Writ by a chain of reasoning in which the following appear to have formed the most adamantine links. As God cursed the serpent for beguiling Eve; as David cursed Mount Gilboa on account of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan; and as our Saviour cursed the fig-tree for not bearing figs in the off season; so in like manner it clearly follows that the Catholic Church has full power and authority to exorcize, excommunicate, anathematize, execrate, curse, and damn the whole animate and inanimate creation without any exception whatsoever. It is true that some learned canonists, puffed up with the conceit of mere human learning and of philosophy falsely so called, presumed to cavil at a line of argument which to plain men must appear irrefragable. They alleged that authority to try and punish offences implies a contract, pact, or stipulation between the supreme power which administers the law and the subjects which submit to it, that the lower animals, being devoid of intelligence, had never entered into any such contract, pact, or stipulation, and that consequently they could not legally be punished for acts which they had committed in ignorance of the law. They urged, further, that the Church could not with any show of justice ban those creatures which she refused to baptize; and they laid great stress on the precedent furnished by the Archangel Michael, who in contending with Satan for possession of the body of Moses, did not bring any railing accusation against the Old Serpent, but left it to the Lord to rebuke him. However, such quibbles and chicane, savouring strongly of rationalism, were of no avail against the solid strength of Scriptural authority and traditional usage on which the Church rested her jurisdiction. The mode in which she exercised it was generally as follows.

This jurisdiction disputed by some canonists.

When the inhabitants of a district suffered from the incursions or the excessive exuberance of noxious animals or insects, they laid a complaint against the said animals or insects in the proper ecclesiastical court, and the court appointed experts to survey and report upon the damage

Mode of proceeding against animals or vermin in the ecclesiastical courts.

that had been wrought. An advocate was next appointed to defend the animals and show cause why they should not be summoned. They were then cited three several times, and not appearing to answer for themselves, judgment was given against them by default. The court after that served a notice on the animals, warning them to leave the district within a specified time under pain of adjuration; and if they did not take their departure on or before the date appointed, the exorcism was solemnly pronounced. However, the courts seem to have been extremely reluctant to push matters to extremity by proclaiming the ban, and they resorted to every shift and expedient for evading or at least deferring the painful necessity. The motive for this long delay in launching the ecclesiastical thunder may have been a tender regard for the feelings of the creatures who were to be blasted by it; though some sceptics pretended that the real reason was a fear lest the animals should pay no heed to the interdict, and, instead of withering away after the anathema, should rather be fruitful and multiply under it, as was alleged to have happened in some cases. That such unnatural multiplication of vermin under excommunication had actually taken place the advocates of the ecclesiastical courts were not prepared to deny, but they attributed it, with every show of reason, to the wiles of the Tempter, who, as we know from the case of Job, is permitted to perambulate the earth to the great annoyance and distress of mankind.

The payment of tithes regarded as the surest way of driving off locusts.

Nor again, could the curse be reasonably expected to operate for the benefit of parishioners whose tithes were in arrear. Hence one of the lights of the law on this subject laid it down as a first principle that the best way of driving off locusts is to pay tithes, and he supported this salutary doctrine by the high authority of the prophet Malachi,[1] who represents the deity as remonstrating in the strongest terms with the Jews on their delay in the payment of his tithes, painting in the most alluring colours the blessings which he would shower down on them, if only they would pay up, and pledging his word that, on receipt of the arrears, he would destroy the locusts that were devouring the crops. The urgency of this appeal to the pockets as well as to

[1] Malachi iii. 7-12.

the piety of his worshippers is suggestive of the low ebb to which the temple funds were reduced in the days of the prophet. His stirring exhortation may have furnished the text of eloquent sermons preached under similar circumstances from many a pulpit in the Middle Ages.[1]

Examples of the prosecution of animals in Europe.

So much for the general principles on which animals were formerly tried and condemned in Europe. A few samples

[1] As to the trial of animals in ecclesiastical and civil courts in various parts of Europe, but particularly in France, see M. Delrio, *Disquisitionum Magicarum libri sex* (Moguntiae, 1624), lib. iii. pars. ii quaest. iv. sect. viii. pp. 460 *sq.*; Pierre le Brun, *Histoire Critique des Pratiques Superstitieuses* (Amsterdam, 1733–1736), i. 242 *sq.*; Berriat-Saint-Prix, "Rapport et Recherches sur les Procès et Jugemens relatifs aux Animaux," *Mémoires et Dissertations publiées par la Société Royale des Antiquaires de France*, viii. (Paris, 1829) pp. 403-450; Léon Ménabréa, "De l'Origine de la Forme et de l'Esprit des Jugements rendus au Moyen-Âge contre les Animaux," *Mémoires de la Société Royale Académique de Savoie*, xii. (Chambéry, 1846) pp. 399-557; F. Nork, *Die Sitten und Gebräuche der Deutschen und ihre Nachbarvölker* (Stuttgart, 1849), pp. 941 *sqq.*; S. Baring-Gould, "Queer Culprits," *Curiosities of Olden Times* (London, N.D., preface dated 1869), pp. 50-71; R. Chambers, *The Book of Days* (London and Edinburgh, 1886), i. 126-129; Édouard Robert, "Procès intentés aux Animaux," *Bulletin de l'Association Générale des Étudiants de Montpellier*, i. No. 6, 1er juin 1888 (Montpellier, 1888), pp. 169-181; "Procès contre les Animaux," *La Tradition*, ii. No. 12, 15 Décembre, 1888 (Paris), pp. 362-364; Karl von Amira, "Thierstrafen und Thierprocesse," *Mittheilungen des Instituts für Oesterreichische Geschichtsforschung* (Innsbruck, 1891), pp. 545-601; Edward Westermarck, *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* (London, 1906–1908), i. 254 *sq.*; E. P. Evans, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* (London, 1906), pp. 1-192, 257-371; Edward Clodd, "Execution of Animals," in J. Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, v. (Edinburgh, 1912) pp. 628 *sq.* The subject is treated most fully by Berriat-Saint-Prix, L. Ménabréa, K. von Amira, and E. P. Evans. The most important collections of original documents are those of Berriat-Saint-Prix and L. Ménabréa; they are reprinted by E. P. Evans, who adds a list of cases (pp. 313-334) and a copious bibliography (pp. 362-371). As to the right of the Church to curse and excommunicate animate and inanimate objects, and the deduction of that right from the texts of Scripture, see Delrio, *l.c.*; L. Ménabréa, *op. cit.* pp. 420 *sqq.*, 480 *sqq.*, 508 *sqq.*; K. von Amira, *op. cit.* pp. 561-564, 570-572; E. P. Evans, *op. cit.* pp. 25 *sq.*, 53-55. Canonists seem to differ as to the exact degree of damnation which the Church is empowered to hurl at these poor creatures. The celebrated case of the Archangel Michael *v.* the Devil is recorded in the Epistle of Jude, *v.* 9. Compare L. Ménabréa, *op. cit.* p. 533. That the best way of getting rid of caterpillars was to pay tithes was stated in so many words ("*Praecipuum remedium abigendi locustas est decimas solvere*") by the great French lawyer Barth. Chassenée or Chasseneux in his classical treatise on the subject, *Consilium primum, quod Tractatus jure dici potest, . . . ubi luculenter et accurate tractatur questio illa de excommunicatione animalium insectorum* (Lyons, 1531; reprinted Lyons, 1588). As to that treatise, see Berriat-Saint-Prix, *op. cit.* pp. 404 *sqq.*; L. Ménabréa, *op. cit.* pp. 512 *sqq.*; E. P. Evans, *op. cit.* pp. 21 *sqq.* The dictum as to the payment of tithes is quoted by L. Ménabréa (p. 503). Compare E. P. Evans, *op. cit.* pp. 37, 39.

of these cases, both civil and ecclesiastical, will help to set the sagacity of our ancestors in a proper light, if not to deepen our respect for the majesty of the law.

Lawsuit brought by the commune of St. Julien against certain coleopterous insects in the fifteenth century.

A lawsuit between the inhabitants of the commune of St. Julien and a coleopterous insect, now known to naturalists as the *Rhynchites auratus*, lasted with lucid intervals for more than forty-two years. At length the inhabitants, weary of litigation, proposed to compromise the matter by giving up, in perpetuity, to the insects a fertile part of the country for their sole use and benefit. The advocate of the animals demurred to the proposal, which would have greatly restricted the natural liberty of his clients; but the court, overruling the demurrer, appointed assessors to survey the land, and as it proved to be well wooded and watered, and in every way suitable to the insects, the ecclesiastical authorities ordered the conveyance to be engrossed in due form and executed. The people now rejoiced at the happy prospect of being rid both of the insects and of the lawsuit; but their rejoicings were premature. Inquiry disclosed the melancholy truth that in the land conveyed to the insects there existed a mine or quarry of an ochreous earth, used as a pigment, and though the quarry had long since been worked out and exhausted, somebody possessed an ancient right-of-way to it which he could not exercise without putting the new proprietors to great inconvenience, not to speak of the risk they would run of bodily injury by being trodden under foot. The obstacle was fatal: the contract was vitiated; and the whole process began afresh. How or when it ended will perhaps never be known, for the record is mutilated. All that is quite certain is, that the suit began in the year 1445, and that it, or another of the same sort, was still in process in the year 1487; from which we may infer with great probability that the people of St. Julien obtained no redress, and that the coleopterous insects remained in possession of the field.[1]

[1] L. Ménabréa, "De l'Origine de la Forme et de l'Esprit des Jugements rendus au Moyen-Âge contre les Animaux," *Mémoires de la Société Royale Académique de Savoie*, xii. (Chambéry, 1846) pp. 403-420, 544-557; R. Chambers, *The Book of Days*, i. 127; E. P. Evans, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* (London, 1906), pp. 37-50, 259-285. The original records of the case are still preserved in the ancient episcopal

Lawsuit against rats in the diocese of Autun in the sixteenth century. Chasseneux's advocacy of the rats.

Another lawsuit carried on against the rats of the diocese of Autun in the early part of the sixteenth century acquired great celebrity through the part taken in it by Bartholomew de Chasseneux, or Chassenée, as he is more commonly named, a famous lawyer and jurisconsult, who has been called the Coke of France, and who laid the foundation of his fame on this occasion by his brilliant advocacy of the rats. It happened that the rats had committed great depredations on the crops, devouring the harvest over a large part of Burgundy. The inhabitants lodged their complaint, and the rats were cited to appear in court to answer to it. The summonses were perfectly regular in form: to prevent all mistakes they described the defendants as dirty animals, of a greyish colour, residing in holes; and they were served in the usual way by an officer of the court, who read out the summons at the places most frequented by the rats. Nevertheless, on the day appointed the rats failed to put in an appearance in court. Their advocate pleaded on behalf of his clients that the summons was of too local and individual a character; that as all the rats in the diocese were interested, all should be summoned from every part of the diocese. The plea being allowed, the curate of every parish in the diocese was instructed to summon every rat for a future day. The day arriving, but still no rats, Chasseneux urged that, as all his clients were summoned, young and old, sick and healthy, great preparations had to be made, and certain arrangements carried into effect, and accordingly he begged for an extension of time. This also being granted, another day was fixed, but still no rats appeared. Their advocate now objected to the legality of the summons, under certain circumstances. A summons from that court, he argued with great plausibility, implied a safe-conduct to the parties summoned both on their way to it and on their return home; but his clients, the rats, though most anxious to appear in obedience to the summons, did not dare to stir out of their holes, being put in bodily fear by the many evil-disposed cats kept by the

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city of St. Jean-de-Maurienne. They were printed for the first time in full by L. Ménabréa (*op. cit.* pp. 544-557), and they have since been reprinted by Mr. E. P. Evans (*op. cit.* pp. 259-284). The commune of St. Julien is situated at the foot of a high mountain on the road to the pass over Mt. Cenis.

plaintiffs. "Let the plaintiffs," he continued, "enter into bonds, under heavy pecuniary penalties, that their cats shall not molest my clients, and the summons will be at once obeyed." The court acknowledged the validity of the plea; but the plaintiffs declining to be bound over for the good behaviour of their cats, the period for the attendance of the rats was adjourned *sine die*.[1]

Criminal proceedings instituted against moles by the commune of the Stelvio in 1519.

Again, in the year 1519 the commune of the Stelvio in the Tyrol instituted criminal proceedings against the moles or field-mice (*Lutmäuse*), which damaged the crops "by burrowing and throwing up the earth, so that neither grass nor green thing could grow." But "in order that the said mice may be able to show cause for their conduct by pleading their exigencies and distress," an advocate, Hans Grienebner by name, was charged with their defence, "to the end that they may have nothing to complain of in these proceedings." The counsel who appeared for the prosecution was Schwarz Mining, and the evidence which he led, by the mouths of many witnesses, proved conclusively the serious injury done by the defendants to the lands of the plaintiffs. The counsel for the defence, indeed, as in duty bound, made the best of a bad case on behalf of his clients. He urged in their favour the many benefits they had conferred on the community, and particularly on the agricultural interest, by destroying noxious insects and grubs, and by stirring up and enriching the soil, and he wound up his plea by expressing a hope that, should his clients lose their case and be sentenced to depart from their present quarters, another suitable place of abode might be assigned to them. He demanded, furthermore, as a simple matter of justice, that they should be granted a safe-conduct securing them against harm or annoyance from cat, dog, or other foe.

[1] J. A. Thuanus (de Thou), *Historiae sui Temporis* (London, 1733), i. 223 *sq.*, lib. vi. anno 1550; Berriat-Saint-Prix, "Rapport et Recherches sur les Procès et Jugemens relatifs aux Animaux," *Mémoires et Dissertations publiées par la Société Royale des Antiquaires de France*, viii. (Paris, 1829) pp. 404 *sqq.*; L. Ménabréa, *op. cit.* pp. 497 *sqq.*; R. Chambers, *The Book of Days*, pp. 127 *sq.*; Alfred de Nore, *Coutumes, Mythes et Traditions des Provinces de France* (Paris and Lyons, 1846), p. 301; S. Baring Gould, *Curiosities of Olden Times*, p. 60; É. Robert, *op. cit.* pp. 178 *sq.*; E. P. Evans, *op. cit.* pp. 18 *sq.* The report of this case is said to be found in the *Martyrologe des Protestants*.

The judge acknowledged the reasonableness of this last request, and with great humanity not only granted the safe-conduct, but allowed a further respite of fourteen days to all such mice as were either with young or still in their infancy.[1]

Legal proceedings taken against certain vermin called *inger* by the authorities of Berne in 1478.

Again, in the year 1478 the authorities of Berne took legal proceedings against the species of vermin popularly known as *inger*, which seems to have been a coleopterous insect of the genus *Brychus*, and of which we are told, and may readily believe, that not a single specimen was to be found in Noah's ark. The case came on before the Bishop of Lausanne, and dragged out for a long time. The defendants, who had proved very destructive to the fields, meadows, and gardens, were summoned in the usual way to appear and answer for their conduct through their advocate before His Grace the Bishop of Lausanne at Wifflisburg on the sixth day after the issue of the summons, at one of the clock precisely. However, the insects turned a deaf ear to the summons, and their advocate, a certain Jean Perrodet of Freiburg, appears to have displayed but little ability or energy in defence of his clients. At all events, sentence was given against them, and the ecclesiastical thunder was launched in the following terms: "We, Benedict of Montferrand, Bishop of Lausanne, etc., having heard the entreaty of the high and mighty lords of Berne against the *inger* and the ineffectual and rejectable answer of the latter, and having thereupon fortified ourselves with the Holy Cross, and having before our eyes the fear of God, from whom alone all just judgments proceed, and being advised in this cause by a council of men learned in the law, do therefore acknowledge and avow in this our writing that the appeal against the detestable vermin and *inger*, which are harmful to herbs, vines, meadows, grain and other fruits, is valid, and that they be exorcised in the person of Jean Perrodet, their defender. In conformity therewith we charge and burden them with our curse, and command them to be obedient, and anathematize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, that they turn away from all fields, grounds, enclosures, seeds, fruits, and produce,

[1] E. P. Evans, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* (London, 1906), pp. 111-113, 307 *sq.*

and depart. By virtue of the same sentence I declare and affirm that you are banned and exorcised, and through the power of Almighty God shall be called accursed and shall daily decrease whithersoever you may go, to the end that of you nothing shall remain save for the use and profit of man." The verdict had been awaited by the people with great anxiety, and the sentence was received with corresponding jubilation. But their joy was short-lived, for, strange to say, the contumacious insects appeared to set the ecclesiastical thunder at defiance; and we are told that they continued to plague and torment the Bernese for their sins, until the sinners had recourse to the usual painful, but effectual, remedy of paying their tithes.[1]

Proceedings against Spanish flies at Coire.

In the thirteenth century the inhabitants of Coire, the capital of the Grisons in Switzerland, instituted proceedings against the green beetles called Spanish flies in the Electorate of Mayence. The judge before whom the insects were cited, out of compassion for the minuteness of their bodies and their extreme youth, granted them a guardian and advocate, who pleaded their cause and obtained for them a piece of land to which they were banished. "And to this day," adds the historian, "the custom is duly observed; every year a definite portion of land is reserved for the beetles, and there they assemble, and no man is subjected to inconvenience by them."[2]

Proceedings against leeches at Lausanne.

Again, in a process against leeches, which was tried at Lausanne in 1451, a number of leeches were brought into court to hear the notice served against them, which admonished all leeches to leave the district within three days. The leeches, however, proving contumacious and refusing to quit the country, they were solemnly exorcized. But the form of exorcism adopted on this occasion differed slightly from the one which was in ordinary use; hence it was adversely criticized by some canonists, though stoutly defended by others. The doctors of Heidelberg in particular, then a famous seat of learning, not only expressed their

[1] E. P. Evans, *op. cit.* pp. 113-121, 309 *sq.* A full report of this case is said to be given by an old Swiss chronicler named Schilling.

[2] Berriat-Saint-Prix, *op. cit.* pp. 411 *sq.*; L. Ménabréa, *op. cit.* pp. 488 *sq.*; S. Baring Gould, *Curiosities of Olden Times*, pp. 61 *sq.*; E. P. Evans, *op. cit.* pp. 110 *sq.* The original authority, to whom all these writers refer, is Felix Malleolus (Hemmerlein), in his *Tractatus de Exorcismis.* The passage from *Tract.* ii. is quoted and translated by Ménabréa (*l.c.*).

entire and unanimous approbation of the exorcism, but imposed silence on all impertinent meddlers who presumed to speak against it. And though they candidly acknowledged that it deviated somewhat from the recognized formula made and provided for such purposes, yet they triumphantly appealed to its efficacy as proved by the result; for immediately after its delivery the leeches had begun to die off day by day, until they were utterly exterminated.[1]

Proceedings against caterpillars at Villenose in 1516.

Among the animal pests against which legal proceedings were taken, a plague of caterpillars would seem to have been one of the most frequent. In the year 1516 an action was brought against these destructive insects by the inhabitants of Villenose, and the case was tried by the Provost of Troyes, who, in giving judgment, admonished the caterpillars to retire within six days from the vineyards and lands of Villenose, threatening them with his solemn curse and malediction if they failed to obey the admonition.[2]

Proceedings against caterpillars at Strambino in Piedmont.

In the seventeenth century the inhabitants of Strambino, in Piedmont, suffered much at the hands of caterpillars, or *gatte*, as they called them, which ravaged the vineyards. When the plague had lasted several years, and the usual remedies of prayers, processions, and holy water had proved of no avail to stay it, the insects were summoned in due form by the bailiff to appear before the podestà or mayor in order to answer the claim against them for the damages they had done in the district. The trial took place in the year 1633, and the original record of it is still preserved in the municipal archives of Strambino. The following is a translation of the document:—

"In A.D. 1633 on the 14th February judicially before the most illustrious Signor Gerolamo San Martino dei Signori and the Signori Matteo Reno, G. M. Barberis, G. Merlo, Consuls of Strambino on behalf of everybody. Whereas for several years in March and during the spring

[1] M. Delrio, *Disquisitionum Magicarum libri sex* (Moguntiae, 1624), p. 460; Berriat-Saint-Prix, *op. cit.* pp. 423, 429; L. Ménabréa, *op. cit.* 499 *sqq.*; R. Chambers, *The Book of Days*, i. 128; S. Baring Gould, *Curiosities of Olden Times*, p. 61; E. P. Evans, *op. cit.* pp. 27 *sq.* The authority for this case appears to be Felix Malleolus, *Tractatus de Exorcismis*.

[2] Pierre Le Brun, *Histoire Critique des Pratiques Superstitieuses* (Amsterdam, 1733–1736), i. 243; Alfred de Nore, *Coutumes, Mythes et Traditions des Provinces de France* (Paris and Lyons, 1846), pp. 301 *sq.*

of each year certain small animals come out in the shape of small worms, called *gatte*, which, from their birth onwards, corrode and consume the branches of the budding grapes in the vineyards of the said Signori and of commoners also. And whereas every power comes from God, whom all creatures obey, even unreasonable ones, and in divine piety recur to the remedy of temporal justice when other human aid is of no avail. We claim, therefore, to appeal to the office of your Excellency in this emergency against these destroying animals, that you may compel them to desist from the said damage, to abandon the vineyards, and summon them to appear before the bench of reason to show cause why they should not desist from corroding and destroying, under penalty of banishment from the place and confiscation. And a declaration of execution is to be proclaimed with shouts and a copy to be affixed to the court.

"Whereas these things having been proved, the Signor Podestà has ordered the said offending animals to appear before the bench to show cause why they should not desist from the aforesaid damage. We, Girolamo di San Martino, Podestà of Strambino, with these presents, summon and assign the animals called *gatte* judicially to appear on the 5th instant before us to show cause why they should not desist from the damage, under penalty of banishment and confiscation in a certain spot. Declaring the execution of the presents to be made by publication and a copy to be affixed to the bench to be made valid on the 14th February 1633. (Signed) SAN MARTINO (Podestà)."[1]

Proceedings against caterpillars in Savoy.

In the neighbouring province of Savoy, from the sixteenth century onwards, "there was one very curious old custom, whereby, when caterpillars and other insects were doing serious damage, they were excommunicated by the priests. The curé went to the ruined fields and two advocates pleaded, the one for the insects, the other against them. The former advanced the argument that as God created animals and insects before man, they had the first right to the produce of the field, and the latter answered him that so much damage had been done the peasants could not afford the

[1] Estella Canziani and Eleanour Rohde, *Piedmont* (London, 1913), pp. 168 *sq.*

depredations, even if the insects had the first right. After a lengthy trial, they were solemnly excommunicated by the priest, who ordered that they should stay on a particular piece of ground which was to be allotted to them." [1]

Proceedings taken against ants by the Friars Minor in Piedade no Maranhao a province of Brazil.

The practice of taking legal proceedings against destructive vermin survived into the first half of the eighteenth century, and was transported by the Church to the New World. In the year 1713 the Friars Minor of the province of Piedade no Maranhao, in Brazil, brought an action against the ants of the said territory, because the said ants did feloniously burrow beneath the foundations of the monastery and undermine the cellars of the said Brethren, thereby weakening the walls of the said monastery and threatening its total ruin. And not content with sapping the foundations of the sacred edifice, the said ants did moreover burglariously enter the stores and carry off the flour which was destined for the consumption of the Brethren. This was most intolerable and not to be endured, and accordingly after all other remedies had been tried in vain, one of the friars gave it as his opinion that, reverting to the spirit of humility and simplicity which had so eminently distinguished their seraphic founder, who termed all creatures his brethren or his sisters, as Brother Sun, Brother Wolf, Sister Swallow, and so forth, they should bring an action against their sisters the ants before the divine tribunal of Providence, and should name counsel for defendants and plaintiffs; also that the bishop should, in the name of supreme Justice, hear the case and give judgment.

The case for the plaintiffs.

This sapient proposal was approved of, and after all arrangements had been made for the trial, an indictment was presented by the counsel for the plaintiffs. As it was contested by the counsel for the defendants, the counsel for the plaintiffs opened his case, showing cause why his clients should receive the protection of the law. He showed that his virtuous clients, the friars, lived upon the public charity, collecting alms from the faithful with much labour and personal inconvenience; whereas the ants, whose morals and manner of life were clearly contrary to the Gospel precepts

[1] Estella Canziani, *Costumes, Traditions and Songs of Savoy* (London, 1911), pp. 128 *sq.*

and were therefore regarded with horror by St. Francis, the founder of the confraternity, did subsist by pillage and fraud; for that, not content with acts of petty larceny, they did go about by open violence to bring down the house about the ears of his clients, the friars. Consequently the defendants were bound to show cause or in default to be sentenced to the extreme penalty of the law, either to be put to death by a pestilence or drowned by a flood, or at all events to be exterminated from the district.

The case for the defendants.

On the other hand, the counsel for the ants argued that, having received from their Maker the gift of life, they were bound by a law of nature to preserve it by means of the natural instincts implanted in them; that in the observance of these means they served Providence by setting men an example of prudence, charity, piety, and other virtues, in proof of which their advocate quoted passages from the Scriptures, St. Jerome, the Abbot Absalon, and even Pliny; that the ants worked far harder than the monks, the burdens which they carried being often larger than their bodies, and their courage greater than their strength; that in the eyes of the Creator men themselves are but worms; that his clients were in possession of the ground long before the plaintiffs established themselves there; that consequently it was the monks, and not the ants, who ought to be expelled from lands to which they had no other claim than a seizure by main force; finally, that the plaintiffs ought to defend their house and meal by human means, which the defendants would not oppose, while they, the defendants, continued their manner of life, obeying the law imposed on their nature and rejoicing in the freedom of the earth, in as much as the earth belongs not to the plaintiffs but to the Lord, for "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof."

Judgment given against the ants.

This answer was followed by replies and counter-replies, in the course of which the counsel for the prosecution saw himself constrained to admit that the debate had very much altered his opinion of the criminality of the defendants. The upshot of the whole matter was that the judge, after carefully revolving the evidence in his mind, gave sentence that the Brethren should appoint a field in the neighbourhood suitable for the habitation of the ants, and that the insects should immedi-

ately shift their quarters to the new abode on pain of suffering the major excommunication. By such an arrangement, he pointed out, both parties would be content and reconciled; for the ants must remember that the monks had come into the land to sow there the seed of the Gospel, while the ants could easily earn their livelihood elsewhere and at even less cost. This sentence having been delivered with judicial gravity, one of the friars was appointed to convey it to the ants, which he did by reading it aloud at the mouths of their burrows. The insects loyally accepted it; and dense columns of them were seen leaving the ant-hills in all haste and marching in a straight line to the residence appointed for them.[1]

Proceedings against rats and mice in the village and lands of Bouranton.

Again, in the year 1733 the rats and mice proved very troublesome in the village and lands of Bouranton. They swarmed in the houses and barns, and they ravaged the fields and vineyards. The villagers accordingly brought an action against the vermin, and the case was tried before the judge, Louis Gublin, on the seventeenth day of September 1733. The plaintiffs were represented by the procurator-fiscal, and the defendants by a certain Nicolas Gublin, who pleaded on behalf of his clients that they too were God's creatures and therefore entitled to live. To this the counsel for the prosecution replied that he desired to place no obstacle in the way of the said animals' life; on the contrary he was ready to point out to them a place to which they could retire and where they could take up their abode. The counsel for the rats and mice thereupon demanded three days' grace to allow his clients to effect their retreat. Having heard both sides, the judge summed up and pronounced sentence. He said that, taking into consideration the great damage done by the said animals, he condemned them to retire within three days from the houses, barns, tilled fields, and vineyards of Bouranton, but that they were free to betake themselves, if they thought fit, to deserts, uncultivated lands, and highroads, always provided they did no manner of harm to fields, houses, and barns; otherwise he would be com-

[1] S. Baring Gould, *Curiosities of Olden Times*, pp. 64-71; E. P. Evans, *op. cit.* pp. 123 *sq.*, citing as their authority P. Manoel Bernardes, in his *Nova Floresta* (Lisboa, 1728, according to Baring Gould; 1747, according to Evans).

pelled to have recourse to God by means of the censures of the Church and the process of excommunication to be pronounced against them. This sentence, engrossed in due form, was signed by the judge Louis Gublin, with his own hand.[1]

Why vermin were dealt with by the ecclesiastical authorities and tame animals by the civil authorities.

It is easy to understand why in all such cases the execution of the sentence was entrusted to the ecclesiastical rather than to the civil authorities. It was physically impossible for a common executioner, however zealous, active and robust, to hang, decapitate, or otherwise execute all the rats, mice, ants, flies, mosquitoes, caterpillars, and other vermin of a whole district; but what is impossible with man is possible and indeed easy with God, and accordingly it was logically and reasonably left to God's ministers on earth to grapple with a problem which far exceeded the capacity of the civil magistrate and his minister the hangman. On the other hand, when the culprits were not wild but tame animals, the problem of dealing with them was much simplified, and was indeed well within the reach of the civil power. In all such cases, therefore, justice took its usual course; there was no difficulty at all in arresting the criminals and in bringing them, after a fair trial, to the gallows, the block, or the stake. That is why in those days vermin enjoyed the benefit of clergy, while tame animals had to submit to all the rigour of the secular arm.

Case of a sow and six little pigs tried for homicide at Savigny.

For example, a sow and her litter of six, belonging to a certain Jehan Bailli, *alias* Valot, were indicted at Savigny in 1457 on a charge that they had "committed murder and homicide on the person of Jehan Martin, aged five years, son of Jehan Martin of the said Savigny." On a full consideration of the evidence the judge gave sentence "that the sow of Jehan Bailli, *alias* Valot, by reason of the murder and homicide committed and perpetrated by the said sow on the person of Jehan Martin of Savigny, be confiscated to the justice of Madame de Savigny, in order to suffer the extreme penalty of the law and to be hanged by the hind feet to a bent tree." The sentence was carried out, for in the record of the case, which is still preserved, we read that "We,

[1] The French document is printed by Augustin Chaboseau in *La Tradition*, ii. No. 12, 15 Décembre, 1888, pp. 363 *sq.*

Nicolas Quaroillon, judge aforesaid, make known to all, that immediately after the aforesaid proceedings, we did really and in fact deliver the said sow to Mr. Etienne Poinceau, minister of high justice, resident at Châlons-sur-Saône, to be executed according to the form and tenor of our said sentence, which deliverance of that sow having been made by us, as hath been said, immediately the said Mr. Estienne did bring on a cart the said sow to a bent tree within the justice of the said Madame de Savigny, and on that bent tree Mr. Estienne did hang the said sow by the hind feet, executing our said sentence, according to its form and tenor." As for the six little pigs, though they were found to be stained with blood, yet "as it did by no means appear that these little pigs did eat the said Jehan Martin," their case was deferred, their owner giving bail for their reappearance at the bar of justice in case evidence should be forthcoming, that they had assisted their homicidal parent in devouring the said Jehan Martin. On the resumption of the trial, as no such evidence was forthcoming, and as their owner refused to be answerable for their good conduct thereafter, the judge gave sentence, that "these little pigs do belong and appertain, as vacant property, to the said Madame de Savigny, and we do adjudge them to her as reason, usage, and the custom of the country doth ordain." [1]

Execution of a sow at Falaise in Normandy.

Again, in the year 1386 a sow tore the face and arm of a boy at Falaise in Normandy, and on the principle of "an eye for an eye" was condemned to be mutilated in the same manner and afterwards hanged. The criminal was led to the place of execution attired in a waistcoat, gloves, and a pair of drawers, with a human mask on her head to complete the resemblance to an ordinary criminal. The execution cost ten sous, ten deniers, and a pair of gloves to the executioner, that he might not soil his hands in the discharge of his professional duty.[2] Sometimes the execution

Cost of the execution of a sow.

[1] Berriat-Saint-Prix, "Rapport et Recherches sur les Procès et Jugemens relatifs aux Animaux," *Mémoires et Dissertations publiées par la Société Royale des Antiquaires de France*, viii. (Paris, 1829) pp. 428, 441-445; E. P. Evans, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* (London, 1906), pp. 153 *sq.*, 346-351.

[2] E. Robert, "Procès intentés aux Animaux," *Bulletin de l'Association Générale des Étudiants de Montpellier*,

of animals was a good deal more expensive. Here is the bill for the execution of a sow which had eaten a child at Meulan, near Paris, in 1403 :—

To the expenditure made for her whilst in jail .	6 sols
Item. To the executioner, who came from Paris to Meulan to carry out the said execution by command and order of the bailiff and the King's Procurator . . .	54 sols
Item. To a cart for conducting her to execution	6 sols
Item. To cords to tie and bind her .	2 sols, 8 denièrs
Item. To gloves	2 denièrs [1]

In 1266 a sow was burned at Fontenay-aux-Roses, near Paris, for having devoured a child ; the order for its execution was given by the officers of justice of the monastery of Sainte-Geneviève.[2]

Execution of other animals in France.

But sows, though they seem to have frequently suffered the extreme penalty of the law, were by no means the only animals that did so. In 1389 a horse was tried at Dijon, on information given by the magistrates of Montbar, and was condemned to death for having killed a man. Again, in the year 1499, the authorities of the Cistercian Abbey of Beaupré, near Beauvais, condemned a bull "to the gallows, unto death inclusively," because it "did furiously kill a young lad of fourteen or fifteen years, in the lordship of Cauroy, a dependency of this abbey." On another occasion a farmer at Moisy, in 1314, allowed a mad bull to escape. The animal gored a man so severely that he only survived a few hours. Hearing of the accident, Charles, Count de Valois, ordered the bull to be seized and committed for trial. This was accordingly done. The officers of the Count gathered all requisite information, received the affidavits of witnesses, and established the guilt of the bull, which was accordingly condemned to death and hanged on the gibbet of Moisy-le-Temple. An appeal against the sentence of the Count's officers was after-

i. No. 6, 1er Juin, 1888, p. 172 ; S. Baring Gould, *Curiosities of Olden Times*, p. 52 ; E. P. Evans, *op. cit.* pp. 140 *sq.*, 335.

[1] Berriat-Saint-Prix, *op. cit.* pp. 433 *sq.* ; S. Baring Gould, *Curiosities of Olden Times*, 53 *sq.*; E. P. Evans, *op. cit.* pp. 141 *sq.*, 338 *sq.*

[2] Berriat-Saint-Prix, *op. cit.* p. 427 ; S. Baring Gould, *Curiosities of Olden Times*, p. 52 ; E. P. Evans, *op. cit.* p. 140.

wards lodged with the parliament; but parliament rejected the appeal, deciding that the bull had got its deserts, though the Count de Valois had exceeded his rights by meddling in the affair. As late as the year 1697 a mare was burned by decree of the Parliament of Aix.[1]

Execution of a cock at Bâle in 1474 for laying an egg.

At Bâle in the year 1474 an aged cock was tried and found guilty of laying an egg. The counsel for the prosecution proved that cock's eggs were of priceless value for mixing in certain magical preparations; that a sorcerer would rather possess a cock's egg than be master of the philosopher's stone; and that in heathen lands Satan employs witches to hatch such eggs, from which proceed animals most injurious to Christians. These facts were too patent and notorious to be denied, nor did the counsel for the prisoner attempt to dispute them. Admitting to the full the act charged against his client, he asked what evil intent had been proved against him in laying an egg? What harm had he done to man or beast? Besides, he urged that the laying of an egg was an involuntary act and, as such, not punishable by law. As for the charge of sorcery, if that was brought against his client, he totally repudiated it, and he defied the prosecution to adduce a single case in which Satan had made a compact with any of the brute creation. In reply the public prosecutor alleged, that though the devil did not make compacts with brutes, he sometimes entered into them, in confirmation of which he cited the celebrated case of the Gadarene swine, pointing out with great cogency that though these animals, being possessed by devils, were involuntary agents, like the prisoner at the bar when he laid an egg, nevertheless they were punished by being made to run violently down a steep place into the lake, where they perished. This striking precedent apparently made a great impression on the court; at all events, the cock was sentenced to death, not in the character of a cock, but in that of a sorcerer or devil who had assumed the form of the fowl, and he and the egg which he had laid were burned together at the stake with all the solemnity of

[1] Berriat-Saint-Prix, *op. cit.* pp. 428 *sq.* (as to the bull at Cauroy); S. Baring Gould, *Curiosities of Olden Times*, pp. 52 *sq.*; E. P. Evans, *op. cit.* pp. 160-162.

a regular execution. The pleadings in this case are said to be voluminous.[1]

Execution of dogs in New England.

If Satan thus afflicted animals in the Old World, it could not reasonably be expected that he would spare them in the New. Accordingly we read without surprise that in New England "a dog was strangely afflicted at Salem, upon which those who had the spectral sight declared that a brother of the justices afflicted the poor animal, by riding upon it invisibly. The man made his escape, but the dog was very unjustly hanged. Another dog was accused of afflicting others, who fell into fits the moment it looked upon them, and it also was killed."[2]

Animals produced in the witness-box in Savoy.

In Savoy it is said that animals sometimes appeared in the witness-box as well as in the dock, their testimony being legally valid in certain well-defined cases. If a man's house was broken into between sunset and sunrise, and the owner killed the intruder, the act was considered a justifiable homicide. But it was deemed just possible that a wicked man, who lived all alone, might decoy another into spending the evening with him, and then, after murdering him, might give it out that his victim was a burglar, whom he had slain in self-defence. To guard against this contingency, and to ensure the conviction of the murderer, the law sagaciously provided that when anybody was killed under such circumstances, the solitary householder should not be held innocent, unless he produced a dog, cat, or cock, an inmate of his house, which had witnessed the homicide and could from personal knowledge attest the innocence of its master. The householder was compelled to make his declaration of innocence before the animal, and if the beast or bird did not contradict him, he was considered to be guiltless, the law taking it for granted that the Deity would directly interpose and open the mouth of the cat, dog, or cock, just as he

[1] R. Chambers, *The Book of Days*, i. 129. Compare Berriat-Saint-Prix, *op. cit.* p. 428; S. Baring Gould, *Curiosities of Olden Times*, p. 55; E. P. Evans, *op. cit.* p. 162; Carl Meyer, *Der Aberglaube des Mittelalters* (Bâle, 1884), p. 73. From the last of these writers we learn that the cock had attained the comparatively patriarchal age of eleven years, which made his indiscretion in laying an egg all the more singular. The case seems to have been reported by Felix Malleolus (Hemmerlein) and recorded in the chronicles of the city.

[2] Thomas Wright, *Narratives of Sorcery and Magic* (London, 1851), ii. 309.

once opened the mouth of Balaam's ass, rather than allow a murderer to escape from justice.[1]

The bell of La Rochelle punished for heresy.

In modern Europe, as in ancient Greece, it would seem that even inanimate objects have sometimes been punished for their misdeeds. After the revocation of the edict of Nantes, in 1685, the Protestant chapel at La Rochelle was condemned to be demolished, but the bell, perhaps out of regard for its value, was spared. However, to expiate the crime of having rung heretics to prayers, it was sentenced to be first whipped, and then buried and disinterred, by way of symbolizing its new birth at passing into Catholic hands. Thereafter it was catechized, and obliged to recant and promise that it would never again relapse into sin. Having made this ample and honourable amends, the bell was reconciled, baptized, and given, or rather sold, to the parish of St. Bartholomew. But when the governor sent in the bill for the bell to the parish authorities, they declined to settle it, alleging that the bell, as a recent convert to Catholicism, desired to take advantage of a law lately passed by the king, which allowed all new converts a delay of three years in paying their debts.[2]

The English law of deodand.

In English law a relic of the same ancient mode of thought survived till near the middle of the nineteenth century in the doctrine and practice of deodand.[3] It was a rule of the common law that not only a beast that killed a man, but any inanimate object that caused his death, such as a cart-wheel which ran over him, or a tree that fell upon him, was *deodand* or given to God, in consequence of which it was forfeited to the king and sold for the benefit of the poor. Hence in all indictments for homicide the instrument of death used to be valued by the grand jury, in order that its money value might be made over to the king or his grantee for pious uses. Thus in practice all deodands came to be looked on as mere forfeitures to the king. Regarded in that light they were

[1] R. Chambers, *The Book of Days*, i. 129, referring to the testimony of "a distinguished Sardinian lawyer."

[2] S. Baring Gould, *Curiosities of Olden Times*, pp. 63 *sq.*, quoting from Benoit's *Histoire de l'Edit de Nantes*, vol. v. p. 754.

[3] Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, Eighteenth Edition (London, 1829), i. 299 *sqq.*; (Sir) Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Second Edition (London, 1873), i. 286 *sq.*; *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Ninth Edition, vii. (Edinburgh, 1877) pp. 100 *sq.*

very unpopular, and in later times the juries, with the connivance of the judges, used to mitigate the forfeitures by finding only some trifling thing, or part of a thing, to have been the occasion of the death. It was not till the year 1846 that this curious survival of primitive barbarism was finally abolished by statute. So long as it lingered in the courts it naturally proved a stumbling-block in the path of philosophical lawyers, who attempted to reduce all rules of English law to the first principles of natural reason and equity, little wotting of the bottomless abyss of ignorance, savagery, and superstition on which the thin layer of modern law and civilization precariously rests. Thus Blackstone supposed that the original intention of forfeiting the instrument of death was to purchase masses for the soul of the person who had been accidentally killed; hence he thought that the deodands ought properly to have been given to the church rather than to the king. The philosopher Reid opined that the aim of the law was not to punish the animal or thing that had been instrumental in killing a human being, but "to inspire the people with a sacred regard to the life of man."[1]

The punishment of animals and inanimate objects explained by Sir Edward Tylor and Adam Smith.

With far greater probability the practice of deodand and all the customs of punishing animals or things for injuries inflicted by them on persons, have been deduced by Sir Edward Tylor from the same primitive impulse which leads the savage to bite the stone he has stumbled over or the arrow that has wounded him, and which prompts the child, and even at times the grown man, to kick or beat the lifeless object from which he has suffered.[2] The principle, if we may call it so, of this primitive impulse is set forth by Adam Smith with all his customary lucidity, insight, and good sense. "The causes of pain and pleasure," he says, "whatever they are, or however they operate, seem to be the objects, which, in all animals, immediately excite those two passions of gratitude and resentment. They are excited by inanimated, as well as by animated objects. We are angry, for a

[1] Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Powers of the Human Mind* (Edinburgh, 1812), iii. 113. He adds, "When the Parliament of Paris, with a similar intention, ordained the house in which Ravilliac was born, to be razed to the ground, and never to be rebuilt, it would be great weakness to conclude, that that wise judicature intended to punish the house."

[2] (Sir) Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Second Edition (London, 1873), i. 285 *sqq.*

moment, even at the stone that hurts us. A child beats it, a dog barks at it, a choleric man is apt to curse it. The least reflection, indeed, corrects this sentiment, and we soon become sensible, that what has no feeling is a very improper object of revenge. When the mischief, however, is very great, the object which caused it becomes disagreeable to us ever after, and we take pleasure to burn or destroy it. We should treat, in this manner, the instrument which had accidentally been the cause of the death of a friend, and we should often think ourselves guilty of a sort of inhumanity, if we neglected to vent this absurd sort of vengeance upon it." [1]

The primitive personification of external objects is reflected in primitive legislation.

Modern researches into the progress of mankind have rendered it probable that in the infancy of the race the natural tendency to personify external objects, whether animate or inanimate, in other words, to invest them with the attributes of human beings, was either not corrected at all, or corrected only in a very imperfect degree, by reflection on the distinctions which more advanced thought draws, first, between the animate and the inanimate creation, and second, between man and the brutes. In that hazy state of the human mind it was easy and almost inevitable to confound the motives which actuate a rational man with the impulses which direct a beast, and even with the forces which propel a stone or a tree in falling. It was in some such mental confusion that savages took deliberate vengeance on animals and things that had hurt or offended them; and the intellectual fog in which such actions were possible still obscured the eyes of the primitive legislators who, in various ages and countries, have consecrated the same barbarous system of retaliation under the solemn forms of law and justice.

[1] Adam Smith, *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments*, Part ii. Section iii. Chapter i. (vol. i. pp. 234 *sq.*, Seventh Edition, London, 1792).

CHAPTER VII

THE GOLDEN BELLS

Violet robe of Jewish priest hung with golden bells.

IN the Priestly Code it is ordained that the priest's robe should be made all of violet, and that the skirts of it should be adorned with a fringe of pomegranates wrought of violet and purple and scarlet stuff, with a golden bell between each pair of pomegranates. This gorgeous robe the priest was to wear when he ministered in the sanctuary, and the golden bells were to be heard jingling both when he entered into the holy place and when he came forth, lest he should die.[1]

The sound of the bells perhaps intended to drive away evil spirits.

Why should the priest in his violet robe, with the fringe of gay pomegranates dangling at his heels, fear to die if the golden bells were not heard to jingle, both when he went into, and when he came forth from the holy place? The most probable answer seems to be that the chiming of the holy bells was thought to drive far off the envious and wicked spirits who lurked about the door of the sanctuary, ready to pounce on and carry off the richly apparelled

[1] Exodus xxviii. 31-35. The Hebrew word (תְּכֵלֶת) which in the English Version is regularly translated "blue," means a blue-purple, as distinguished from another word (אַרְגָּמָן) which means red-purple, inclining to crimson, as the other shades into violet. See F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and Ch. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1906), pp. 71, 1067; W. Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*[14] (Leipsic, 1905), pp. 56 *sq.*, 803; and the commentaries of A. Dillmann, W. H. Bennett, A. H. McNeile, and S. R. Driver on Exodus xxv. 4. It might be doubted whether the pomegranates of violet, purple, and scarlet stuff were embroidered on the hem of the robe or hung free from it, like the bells. But a single consideration seems decisive in favour of the latter interpretation. For if the fruits had simply been embroidered on the skirt, the purple and scarlet pomegranates would indeed have been conspicuous enough, but the violet pomegranates would have been hardly, if at all, distinguishable, on the violet background. Hence it seems better to suppose that the pomegranates hung like heavy tassels from the hem of the robe, forming with the golden bells a rich fringe to the garment.

minister as he stepped across the threshold in the discharge of his sacred office. At least this view, which has found favour with some modern scholars,[1] is strongly supported by analogy; for it has been a common opinion, from the days of antiquity downwards, that demons and ghosts can be put to flight by the sound of metal, whether it be the musical jingle of little bells, the deep-mouthed clangour of great bells, the shrill clash of cymbals, the booming of gongs, or the simple clink and clank of plates of bronze or iron knocked together or struck with hammers or sticks. Hence in rites of exorcism it has often been customary for the celebrant either to ring a bell which he holds in his hand, or to wear attached to some part of his person a whole nest of bells, which jingle at every movement he makes. Examples will serve to illustrate the antiquity and the wide diffusion of such beliefs and practices.[2]

Clash of bronze used to drive away spirits in antiquity.

Lucian tells us that spectres fled at the sound of bronze and iron, and he contrasts the repulsion which the clank of these metals exerted on spirits with the attraction which the chink of silver money wielded over women of a certain class.[3] At Rome, when the ghosts of the dead had paid their annual visit to the old home in the month of May, and had been entertained with a frugal repast of black beans, the householder used to show them the door, bidding them, "Ghosts of my fathers, go forth!" and emphasizing his request or command by the clash of bronze.[4] Nor did such

[1] J. Wellhausen, *Reste Arabischen Heidentumes* (Berlin, 1887), p. 144; W. H. Bennett, *Exodus*, p. 225 (*The Century Bible*); A. H. McNeile, *The Book of Exodus* (London, 1908), p. 185; Anton Jirku, *Die Dämonen und ihre Abwehr im Alten Testament* (Leipsic, 1912), p. 85. In the second edition of his *Reste Arabischen Heidentumes* (Berlin, 1897, p. 165) Wellhausen tacitly omitted this explanation of the bells of Jewish priests, but retained it for the bells of Jewish horses as described by the prophet Zechariah (xiv. 20). But surely the priests were not less exposed than the horses to the impious attacks of demons and needed quite as much to be protected against them.

[2] On the folk-lore of bells, see P. Sartori, "Glockensagen und Glockenaberglaube," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*, vii. (1897) pp. 113-129, 270-286, 358-369, viii. (1898) pp. 29-38; Rev. Geo. S. Tyack, *A Book about Bells* (London, preface dated 1898), pp. 170 *sqq.* The German writer's copious collection of evidence is drawn mostly from Europe. The evidence from classical antiquity is collected and discussed by my friend Mr. A. B. Cook in his learned article, "The Gong at Dodona," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, xxii. (1902), pp. 5-28.

[3] Lucian, *Philopseudes*, 15.

[4] Ovid, *Fasti*, v. 419-444.

notions as to the dislike which spirits entertain for the tinkle of metal expire with expiring paganism. They survived in full force under Christianity into the Middle Ages and long afterwards. The learned Christian scholiast, John Tzetzes, tells us that the clash of bronze was just as effective to ban apparitions as the barking of a dog,[1] a proposition which few reasonable men will be inclined to dispute.

Use of church bells to drive away evil spirits.

But in Christian times the sound deemed above all others abhorrent to the ears of fiends and goblins has been the sweet and solemn music of church bells. The first Provincial Council of Cologne laid it down as an opinion of the fathers that at the sound of the bells summoning Christians to prayer demons are terrified and depart, and the spirits of the storm, the powers of the air, are laid low. However, the members of the Council themselves apparently inclined to attribute this happy result rather to the fervent intercession of the faithful than to the musical clangour of the bells.[2] Again, the service book known as the Roman Pontifical recognizes the virtue of a church bell, wherever its sound is heard, to drive far off the powers of evil, the gibbering and mowing spectres of the dead, and all the spirits of the storm.[3] A great canonist of the thirteenth century, Durandus, in his once famous and popular treatise on the divine offices, tells us that "bells are rung in processions that demons may fear and flee. For when they hear the trumpets of the church militant, that is, the bells, they are afraid, as any tyrant is afraid when he hears in his land the trumpets of a powerful king, his foe. And that, too, is the reason why, at the sight of a storm rising, the Church rings its bells, in order that the demons, hearing the trumpets of the eternal king, that is, the bells, may be terrified and flee away and abstain from stirring up the

[1] J. Tzetzes, *Scholia on Lycophron*, 77 (vol. i. p. 368, ed. C. G. Müller, Leipsic, 1811).

[2] Jean-Baptiste Thiers, *Traitez des Cloches* (Paris, 1721), p. 145, "*Le premier Concile Provincial de Cologne le dit encore plus nettement, selon la pensée des SS. Peres: 'Patres aliò respexerunt, videlicet ut daemones tinnitu campanarum Christianos ad preces concitantium, quin potiùs precibus ipsis territi abscedant, spiritus procellarum, et aërae (sic) potestates prosternantur.'*"

[3] "*Ut ubicumque sonuerit hoc tintinnabulum procul recedat virtus insidiantium, umbra phantasmatum, omnisque spiritus procellarum,*" quoted by J. B. Thiers, *Traitez des Cloches*, p. 144.

tempest." [1] On this subject the English antiquary, Captain Francis Grose, the friend of the poet Burns,[2] writes as follows: "The passing-bell was anciently rung for two purposes: one, to bespeak the prayers of all good Christians for a soul just departing; the other, to drive away the evil spirits who stood at the bed's foot, and about the house, ready to seize their prey, or at least to molest and terrify the soul in its passage: but by the ringing of that bell (for Durandus informs us, evil spirits are much afraid of bells), they were kept aloof; and the soul, like a hunted hare, gained the start, or had what is by sportsmen called Law. Hence, perhaps, exclusive of the additional labour, was occasioned the high price demanded for tolling the greatest bell of the church; for that being louder, the evil spirits must go farther off, to be clear of its sound, by which the poor soul got so much more the start of them: besides, being heard farther off, it would likewise procure the dying man a greater number of prayers. This dislike of spirits to bells is mentioned in the Golden Legend, by W. de Worde. 'It is said, the evill spirytes that ben in the regyon of th' ayre, doubte moche when they here the belles rongen: and this is the cause why the belles ben rongen whan it thondreth, and whan grete tempeste and outrages of wether happen, to the ende that the feindes and wycked spirytes should be abashed and flee, and cease of the movynge of tempeste.'" [3]

Longfellow on church bells in *The Golden Legend.*

In his poetical version of *The Golden Legend* Longfellow has introduced this picturesque superstition with good effect. In the prologue he represents the spire of Strassburg Cathedral in night and storm, with Lucifer and the powers of the air hovering round it, trying in vain to tear down the cross and to silence the importunate clangour of the bells.

[1] G. Durandus, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, lib. i. cap. 4. 14 *sq.* (vol. i. p. 21, Lugdunum, 1584). As to Durandus (Durantis or Duranti), see *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Ninth Edition, vii. (Edinburgh, 1877) p. 552.

[2] According to the poet, Captain Grose's valuable collection of antiquities comprised, among other items, a cinder of Eve's first fire, Tubalcain's fire-shovel and fender, a part of the anatomy of Balaam's ass, and a brass-shod broomstick of the witch of Endor. See the verses *On the late Captain Grose's Peregrinations thro' Scotland.*

[3] Francis Grose, *A Provincial Glossary, with a Collection of Local Proverbs and Popular Superstitions*, New Edition (London, 1811), pp. 297 *sq.*

"*Lucifer. Lower! lower!*
Hover downward!
Seize the loud vociferous bells, and
Clashing, clanging, to the pavement
Hurl them from their windy tower.
"*Voices. All thy thunders*
Here are harmless!
For these bells have been anointed,
And baptized with holy water!
They defy our utmost power."

And above all the tumult of the storm and the howling of the infernal legion is heard the solemn voice of the bells:—

"*Defunctos ploro!*
Pestem fugo!
Festa decoro!"

And again,

"*Funera plango*
Fulgura frango
Sabbata pango,"

until the baffled demons are fain to sweep away in the darkness, leaving behind them unharmed the cathedral, where through the gloom the Archangel Michael with drawn sword is seen flaming in gold and crimson on the panes of the lighted windows, while, as they recede into the distance, they are pursued in their flight by the pealing music of the organ and the voices of the choir chanting

"*Nocte surgentes*
Vigilemus omnes!"

The Passing Bell.

Of the two reasons which Grose assigns for the ringing of the Passing Bell we may surmise that the intention of driving away evil spirits was the primary and original one, and that the intention of bespeaking the prayers of all good Christians for the soul just about to take its flight was secondary and derivative. In any case the ringing of the bell seems formerly to have regularly begun while the sufferer was still in life, but when his end was visibly near.[1] This appears from not a few passages which antiquarian diligence has gleaned from the writings of old

[1] This appears to follow conclusively from the evidence collected by John Brand, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain* (London, 1882–1883), ii. 202 *sqq.* Compare Rev. Geo. S. Tyack, *A Book about Bells*, pp. 191 *sqq.*; H. B. Walters, *Church Bells of England* (London, etc., 1912), pp. 154 *sqq.*

authors. Thus in his *Anatomie of Abuses* Stubbes tells of the dreadful end of a profane swearer down in Lincolnshire: "At the last, the people perceiving his ende to approche, caused the bell to toll; who, hearing the bell to toll for him, rushed up in his bed very vehemently, saying, 'God's bloud, he shall not have me yet'; with that his bloud gushed out, some at his toes endes, some at his fingers endes, some at hys wristes, some at his nose and mouth, some at one joynt of his body, some at an other, never ceasing till all the bloud in his body was streamed forth. And thus ended this bloudy swearer his mortal life."[1] Again, when Lady Catherine Grey was dying a prisoner in the Tower, the Governor of the fortress, perceiving that his prisoner was about to be released from his charge, without any royal warrant, said to Mr. Bokeham, "Were it not best to send to the church, that the bell may be rung?" And she, feeling her end to be near, entered into prayer, saying, "O Lord! into thy hands I commend my soul: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"[2] Thus for her, as for many, the sound of the Passing Bell was the *Nunc dimittis*. Once more a writer in the first half of the eighteenth century, speaking of the dying Christian who has subdued his passions, says that, "if his senses hold out so long, he can hear even his passing-bell without disturbance."[3]

The Passing Bell rung to banish demons.

That the real purpose of the Passing Bell was to dispel maleficent beings hovering invisible in the air rather than to advertise persons at a distance and invite their prayers, is strongly suggested by the apparently primitive form in which the old custom has here and there been kept up down to modern times. Thus in some parts of the Eifel Mountains, a district of Rhenish Prussia, when a sick person was at the point of death, the friends used to ring a small hand-bell, called a Benedictus bell, "in order to keep the evil spirits away from the dying man."[4] Again, at Neusohl, in northern

[1] Philip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, reprinted from the Third Edition of 1585 (London and Edinburgh, 1836), p. 153.

[2] J. Brand, *op. cit.* ii. 206.

[3] Robert Nelson, *A Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England* (edition of 1732), p. 144, quoted by J. Brand, *op. cit.* ii. 206. I have not found the passage in the 24th edition of Nelson's book published at London in 1782.

[4] J. H. Schmitz, *Sitten und Bräuche, Lieder, Sprüchwörter und Räthsel des Eifler Volkes* (Treves, 1856–1858), i. 65.

Hungary, it is said to have been usual to ring a small hand-bell softly when a dying man was near his end, "in order that the parting soul, lured away by death, may still linger for a few moments on earth near its stiffening body." When death had taken place, the bell was rung a little farther off, then farther and farther from the body, then out at the door, and once round the house "in order to accompany the soul on its parting way." After that, word was sent to the sexton that the bell of the village church might begin to toll.[1] A similar custom is said to have prevailed in the Böhmerwald mountains, which divide Bohemia from Bavaria.[2] The motive assigned for it—the wish to detain the parting soul for a few moments by the sweet sound of the bell—is too sentimental to be primitive; the true original motive was doubtless, as in the case of the similar custom in the Eifel Mountains, to banish the demons that might carry off the poor soul at the critical moment. Only when the little bell has performed this kindly office, tinkling for the soul at its setting out, does the big bell in the steeple begin to toll, that its sonorous tones may follow, like guardian angels, the fugitive on its long journey to the spirit land.

Dante on the vesper bell.

In a famous passage of the *Purgatory* Dante[3] has beautifully applied the conception of the Passing Bell to the sound of the Vesper Bell heard afar off by voyagers at sea, as if the bell were tolling for the death of day or of the sun then sinking in the crimson west. Hardly less famous is Byron's imitation of the passage:—

> "*Soft hour! which wakes the wish and melts the heart*
> *Of those who sail the seas, on the first day*
> *When they from their sweet friends are torn apart;*
> *Or fills with love the pilgrim on his way*
> *As the far bell of vesper makes him start,*
> *Seeming to weep the dying day's decay.*"[4]

Gray on the curfew bell.

And the same thought has been no less beautifully applied by our own poet Gray to the curfew bell heard at evening among the solemn yews and elms of an English churchyard:—

> "*The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.*"

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[1] Theodor Vernaleken, *Mythen und Bräuche des Volkes in Österreich* (Vienna, 1859), p. 311.

[2] C. L. Rochholtz, *Deutscher Glaube und Brauch* (Berlin, 1867), i. 179.

[3] *Purgatorio*, Canto viii. *vv.* 1-6.

[4] Byron, *Don Juan*, Canto iii. Stanza cviii.

There is, indeed, something peculiarly solemnizing and affecting in the sound of church bells heard at such times and places; it falls upon the ear, in the language of Froude, like the echo of a vanished world.[1] The feeling was well expressed by the American poet Bret Harte,[2] when he heard, or rather imagined that he heard, the Angelus rung at evening on the site of the long-abandoned Spanish mission at Dolores in California :— Bret Harte on the Angelus.

"*Bells of the Past, whose long-forgotten music*
Still fills the wide expanse,
Tingeing the sober twilight of the Present
With colour of Romance!

"*I hear your call, and see the sun descending*
On rock and wave and sand,
As down the coast the Mission voices, blending,
Girdle the heathen land.

"*Within the circle of your incantation*
No blight nor mildew falls;
Nor fierce unrest, nor lust, nor low ambition
Passes those airy walls.

"*Borne on the swell of your long waves receding,*
I touch the farther past,—
I see the dying glow of Spanish glory,
The sunset dream and last.

. . . . . .

"*O solemn bells! whose consecrated masses*
Recall the faith of old,—
O tinkling bells! that lulled with twilight music
The spiritual fold!"

A like sense of the power of bells to touch the heart and attune the mind to solemn thought is conveyed in a characteristic passage of Renan, in whom the austere convictions of the religious sceptic were happily tempered by the delicate perceptions of the literary artist. Protesting against the arid rationalism of the German theologian Feuerbach, he exclaims, "Would to God that M. Feuerbach had steeped himself in sources of life richer than those of his exclusive Renan on church bells.

[1] J. A. Froude, *History of England*, New Edition (London, 1875), vol. i. p. 62, chapter i., "The sound of church bells, that peculiar creation of mediaeval age, which falls upon the ear like the echo of a vanished world."

[2] *The Angelus*, heard at the Mission Dolores, 1868.

and haughty Germanism! Ah! if, seated on the ruins of the Palatine or the Coelian Mount, he had heard the sound of the eternal bells lingering and dying over the deserted hills where Rome once was; or if, from the solitary shore of the Lido, he had heard the chimes of Saint Mark's expiring across the lagoons; if he had seen Assisi and its mystic marvels, its double basilica and the great legend of the second Christ of the Middle Ages traced by the brush of Cimabue and Giotto; if he had gazed his fill on the sweet far-away look of the Virgins of Perugino, or if, in San Domenico at Sienna, he had seen Saint Catherine in ecstasy, no, M. Feuerbach would not thus have cast reproach on one half of human poetry, nor cried aloud as if he would repel from him the phantom of Iscariot!"[1]

Importance of the emotional side of folk-lore.

Such testimonies to the emotional effect of church bells on the hearer are not alien from the folk-lore of the subject; we cannot understand the ideas of the people unless we allow for the deep colour which they take from feeling and emotion, least of all can we sever thought and feeling in the sphere of religion. There are no impassable barriers between the conceptions of the reason, the sensations of the body, and the sentiments of the heart; they are apt to melt and fuse into each other under waves of emotion, and few things can set these waves rolling more strongly than the power of music. A study of the emotional basis of folk-lore has hardly yet been attempted; inquirers have confined their attention almost exclusively to its logical and rational, or, as some might put it, its illogical and irrational elements. But no doubt great discoveries may be expected from the future exploration of the influence which the passions have exerted in moulding the institutions and destiny of mankind.

Church bells rung to drive away witches and wizards.

Throughout the Middle Ages and down to modern times the sound of church bells was also in great request for the purpose of routing witches and wizards, who gathered unseen in the air to play their wicked pranks on man and beast. There were certain days of the year which these wretches set apart more particularly for their unhallowed assemblies or

[1] Ernest Renan, "M. Feuerbach et la nouvelle École Hégélienne," *Études d'Histoire Religieuse*, Huitième Édition (Paris, 1897), pp. 408 *sq.*

Sabbaths, as they were called, and on such days accordingly the church bells were specially rung, sometimes the whole night long, because it was under cover of darkness that witches and warlocks were busiest at their infernal tasks. For example, in France witches were thought to scour the air most particularly on the night of St. Agatha, the fifth of February; hence the bells of the parish churches used to be set ringing that night to drive them away, and the same custom is said to have been observed in some parts of Spain.[1] Again, one of the most witching times of the whole year was Midsummer Eve; and accordingly at Rottenburg in Swabia the church bells rang all that night from nine o'clock till break of day, while honest folk made fast their shutters, and stopped up even chinks and crannies, lest the dreadful beings should insinuate themselves into the houses.[2] Other witches' Sabbaths used to be held at Twelfth Night and the famous Walpurgis Night, the eve of May Day, and on these days it used to be customary in various parts of Europe to expel the baleful, though invisible, crew by making a prodigious racket, to which the ringing of hand-bells and the cracking of whips contributed their share.[3]

The bellman.

But though witches and wizards chose certain seasons of the year above all others for the celebration of their unholy revels, there was no night on which they might not be encountered abroad on their errands of mischief by belated wayfarers, none on which they might not attempt to force their way into the houses of honest folk who were quiet, but by no means safe, in bed. Something, therefore, had to be done to protect peaceable citizens from these nocturnal alarms. For this purpose the watchmen, who patrolled the streets for the repression of common crime, were charged with the additional duty of exorcizing the dreaded powers of the air and of darkness, which went about like roaring lions seeking what they might devour. To accomplish this object the night watchman wielded spiritual weapons of two different sorts but of equal power; he rang a bell, and he chanted a blessing, and if the sleepers in the neighbourhood

[1] Jean Baptiste Thiers, *Traité des Superstitions* (Paris, 1679), p. 269.

[2] Anton Birlinger, *Volksthümliches aus Schwaben* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1861–1862), i. 278, § 437.

[3] *The Scapegoat*, pp. 159, 161, 165, 166 (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part vi.).

were roused and exasperated by the jingle of the one, they were perhaps soothed and comforted by the drone of the other, remembering, as they sank back to sleep, that it was only, in the words of Milton,[1]

Milton on the bellman.

> "*the bellman's drowsy charm*
> *To bless the doors from nightly harm.*"

The benediction which thus broke the stillness of night was usually cast in a poetical form of such unparalleled atrocity that a bellman's verses have been proverbial ever since.[2] Their general tenor may be gathered from the lines which Herrick puts in the mouth of one of those public guardians, from whose nightly orisons the poet, like Milton himself, must have often suffered :—

Herrick on the bellman.

> "*THE BELL-MAN.*
>
> *From noise of scare-fires rest ye free,*
> *From murders Benedicitie ;*
> *From all mischances that may fright*
> *Your pleasing slumbers in the night ;*
> *Mercie secure ye all, and keep*
> *The goblin from ye, while ye sleep.*
> *Past one aclock, and almost two,*
> *My masters all, 'Good day to you.'*" [3]

Addison on the bellman.

Addison tells us how he heard the bellman begin his midnight homily with the usual exordium, which he had been repeating to his hearers every winter night for the last twenty years,

> "*Oh! mortal man, thou that art born in sin!*" [4]

And though this uncomplimentary allocution might excite pious reflexions in the mind of an Addison, it seems calculated to stir feelings of wrath and indignation in the breasts of more ordinary people, who were roused from their first sleep only to be reminded, at a very unseasonable hour, of the doctrine of original sin.

[1] *Il Penseroso*, 83 *sq.*

[2] R. Chambers, *The Book of Days* (London and Edinburgh, 1886), i. 496 *sq.* Macaulay speaks of "venal and licentious scribblers, with just sufficient talent to clothe the thoughts of a pandar in the style of a bellman" ("Milton," *Critical and Historical Essays*, i. 31, *Temple Classics Edition*).

[3] Robert Herrick, *Works* (Edinburgh, 1823), i. 169.

[4] *The Tatler*, No. cxi., Saturday, 24th December, 1709; Joseph Addison, *Works*, with notes by Richard Hurd, D.D. (London, 1811), ii. 272 *sq.*

We have seen that according to mediaeval authors church bells used to be rung in thunderstorms for the purpose of driving away the evil spirits who were supposed to be causing the tempest.[1] To the same effect an old German writer of the sixteenth century, who under the assumed name of Naogeorgus composed a satirical poem on the superstitions and abuses of the Catholic Church, has recorded that

Church bells rung to drive away the spirits of the storm.

Naogeorgus on the superstitious use of bells in the Catholic Church.

"*If that the thunder chaunce to rore, and stormie tempest shake,*
A wonder is it for to see the wretches howe they quake,
Howe that no fayth at all they have, nor trust in any thing,
The clarke doth all the belles forthwith at once in steeple ring:
With wondrous sound and deeper farre, than he was woont before,
Till in the loftie heavens darke, the thunder bray no more.
For in these christned belles they thinke, doth lie such powre and might,
As able is the tempest great, and storme to vanquish quight.
I sawe my self at Numburg once, a town in Toring coast,
A bell that with this title bolde, hir self did prowdly boast,
'By name I Mary called am, with sound I put to flight
The thunder crackes, and hurtfull stormes, and every wicked spright.'
Such things whenas these belles can do, no wonder certainlie
It is, if that the Papistes to their tolling alwayes flie,
When haile, or any raging storme, or tempest comes in sight,
Or thunder boltes, or lightning fierce that every place doth smight."[2]

Church bells rung to drive away thunderstorms.

In the Middle Ages, we are told, all over Germany the church bells used to be rung during thunderstorms; and the sexton received a special due in corn from the parishioners for his exertions in pulling the bell-rope in these emergencies. These dues were paid in some places as late as the middle of the nineteenth century.[3] For example, at Jubar in the Altmark, whenever a thunderstorm burst, the sexton was bound to ring the church bell, and he received from every farmer five "thunder-sheaves" of corn for the pains he had been at to rescue the crops from destruction.[4]

[1] Above, pp. 448 *sq.*

[2] Thomas Naogeorgus, *The Popish Kingdome, Englyshed by Barnabe Googe*, reprint, edited by R. C. Hope (London, 1880), ff. 41 *sq.*

[3] Heino Pfannenschmid, *Germanische Erntefeste* (Hanover, 1878), pp. 90 *sq.*, 394 *sq.*, 396 *sq.*; W. Mannhardt, *Die Götterwelt der deutschen und nordischen Völker*, i. (Berlin, 1860) p. 93; J. A. E. Köhler, *Volksbrauch, Aberglauben, Sagen und andre alte Ueberlieferungen* (Leipsic, 1867), p. 431; G. A. Heinrich, *Agrarische Sitten und Gebräuche unter den Sachsen Siebenbürgens* (Hermannstadt, 1880), p. 13; Ulrich Jahn, *Die deutschen Opfergebräuche bei Ackerbau und Viehzucht* (Breslau, 1884), pp. 56 *sq.*

[4] A. Kuhn und W. Schwartz, *Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche* (Leipsic, 1848), p. 454.

Writing as to the custom in Swabia about the middle of the nineteenth century, a German author tells us that "in most Catholic parishes, especially in Upper Swabia, the bells are rung in a thunderstorm to drive away hail and prevent damage by lightning. Many churches have special bells for the purpose; for instance, the monastery of Weingarten, near Altdorf, has the so-called 'holy Blood-bell,' which is rung during a thunderstorm. In Wurmlingen they ring the bell on Mount Remigius, and if they only do it soon enough, no lightning strikes any place in the district. However, the neighbouring villages, for example Jesingen, are often discontented at the ringing of the bell, for they believe that with the thunderstorm the rain is also driven away."[1] With regard to the town of Constance, in particular we read that, when a thunderstorm broke, the bells of all the parish churches not only in the city but in the neighbourhood were set a-ringing; and as they had been consecrated, many persons believed that the sound of them furnished complete protection against injury by lightning. Indeed, in their zeal not a few people assisted the sexton to pull the bell-ropes, tugging at them with all their might to make the bells swing high. And though some of these volunteers, we are informed, were struck dead by lightning in the very act of ringing the peal, this did not prevent others from doing the same. Even children on such occasions rang little handbells made of lead or other metals, which were adorned with figures of saints and had been blessed at the church of Maria Loretto in Steiermerk or at Einsiedeln.[2] Under certain feudal tenures the vassals were bound to ring the church bells on various occasions, but particularly during thunderstorms.[3]

[1] Ernst Meier, *Deutsche Sagen, Sitten und Gebräuche aus Schwaben* (Stuttgart, 1852), pp. 260 *sq.*

[2] Anton Birlinger, *Volksthümliches aus Schwaben* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1861–1862), ii. 443; compare *id.*, i. 147 *sqq.* And for more evidence of the custom in Swabia and other parts of Germany, see *id.*, *Aus Schwaben* (Wiesbaden, 1874), i. 118 *sq.*, 464; Fr. Panzer, *Beitrag zur deutschen Mythologie* (Munich, 1848–1855), ii. 184, 417; J. H. Schmitz, *Sitten und Sagen, Lieder, Sprüchwörter und Räthsel des Eifler Volkes* (Treves, 1856–1858), i. 99; L. Strackerjan, *Aberglaube und Sagen aus dem Herzogthum Oldenburg* (Oldenburg, 1867), i. 63.

[3] H. Pfannenschmid, *Germanische Erntefeste* (Hanover, 1878), p. 609; U. Jahn, *Die deutschen Opfergebräuche bei Ackerbau und Viehzucht* (Breslau, 1884), p. 57.

Consecration of bells; inscriptions on bells.

The bells were solemnly consecrated and popularly supposed to be baptized by the priests; certainly they received names and were washed, blessed, and sprinkled with holy oil "to drive away and repel evil spirits."[1] Inscriptions engraved on church bells often refer to the power which they were supposed to possess of dispelling storms of thunder, lightning, and hail; some boldly claim such powers for the bells themselves, others more modestly pray for deliverance from these calamities; for instance, a bell at Haslen bears in Latin the words, "From lightning, hail, and tempest, Lord Jesus Christ deliver us!"[2] Speaking of St. Wenefride's Well, in Flintshire, the traveller and antiquary Pennant in the eighteenth century tells us that "a bell belonging to the church was also christened in honour of her. I cannot learn the names of the gossips, who, as usual, were doubtless rich persons. On the ceremony they all laid hold of the rope; bestowed a name on the bell; and the priest, sprinkling it with holy water, baptised it in the name of the Father, etc.; he then clothed it with a fine garment. After this the gossips gave a grand feast, and made great presents, which the priest received in behalf of the bell. Thus blessed, it was endowed with great powers; allayed (on being rung) all storms; diverted the thunderbolt; drove away evil spirits. These consecrated bells were always inscribed. The inscription on that in question ran thus:

'*Sancta Wenefreda, Deo hoc commendare memento,*
Ut pietate sua nos servet ab hoste cruento.'

And a little lower was another address:—

'*Protege prece pia quos convoco, Virgo Maria.*'"[3]

Delrio on the consecration and ringing of church bells.

However, the learned Jesuit Father, Martin Delrio, who published an elaborate work on magic early in the seven-

[1] Carl Meyer, *Der Aberglaube des Mittelalters und der nächstfolgenden Jahrhunderte* (Bâle, 1884), pp. 186 *sq.*; W. Smith and S. Cheetham, *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* (London, 1875-1880), i. 185 *sq.*, *s.v.* "Bells"; H. B. Walters, *Church Bells of England* (London, etc., 1912), pp. 256 *sqq.* Compare H. Pfannenschmid, *Germanische Erntefeste*, pp. 90, 395.

[2] Carl Meyer, *Der Aberglaube der Mittelalters*, pp. 185 *sq.*; H. Pfannenschmid, *Germanische Erntefeste*, p. 395.

[3] Quoted by J. Brand, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*, ii. 215.

teenth century, indignantly denied that bells were baptized, though he fully admitted that they were named after saints, blessed, and anointed by ecclesiastical authority. That the ringing of church bells laid a wholesome restraint on evil spirits, and either averted or allayed the tempests wrought by these enemies of mankind, was, in the opinion of the learned Jesuit, a fact of daily experience too patent to be denied; but he traced these happy results purely to the consecration or benediction of the bells, and not at all to their shape or to the nature of the metal of which they were founded. He spurned as a pagan superstition the notion that the sound of brass sufficed of itself to put demons to flight, and he ridiculed the idea that a church bell lost all its miraculous virtue when it was named—he will not allow us to say baptized—by the priest's concubine.[1] Bacon condescended to mention the belief that "great ringing of bells in populous cities hath chased away thunder, and also dissipated pestilent air"; but he suggested a physical explanation of the supposed fact by adding, "All which may be also from the concussion of the air, and not from the sound."[2]

Bacon on the ringing of bells in thunder-storms.

While all holy bells no doubt possessed in an exactly equal degree the marvellous property of putting demons and witches to flight, and thereby of preventing the ravages of thunder and lightning, some bells were more celebrated than others for the active exertion of their beneficent powers. Such, for instance, was St. Adelm's Bell at Malmesbury Abbey and the great bell of the Abbey of St. Germains in Paris, which were regularly rung to drive away thunder and lightning.[3] In old St. Paul's Cathedral there was a special endowment for "ringing the hallowed belle in great tempestes

Bells famed for their power of driving away thunder.

[1] M. Delrio, *Disquisitionum Magicarum libri sex* (Moguntiae, 1624), lib. vi. cap. ii. sect. iii. quaest. iii. pp. 1021-1024. The library of the Middle Temple, London, possesses a copy of an earlier edition of this work, published at Lyons (Lugdunum) in 1612; but even this is not the first edition, for it is described on the title-page as *Editio Postrema, quae ut auctior castigatiorque ceteris, sic et Indicibus pernecessariis prodit hodie illustrior.* I have a copy of the 1624 edition. By a curious oversight Sir Edward B. Tylor appears to have supposed that Delrio's book was first published in 1720. See *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Ninth Edition, vii. (Edinburgh, 1877) p. 62, *s.v.* "Demonology."

[2] Francis Bacon, "Natural History," cent. ii. 127, *The Works of Francis Bacon* (London, 1740), iii. 35.

[3] John Aubrey, *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme* (1686–87), edited and annotated by J. Britten (London, 1881), pp. 22, 96.

and lighteninges."[1] However, the feats of European bells in this respect have been thrown into the shade by the bells of Caloto in South America; though probably the superior fame of the bells of Caloto is to be ascribed, not so much to any intrinsic superiority of their own, as to the extraordinary frequency of thunderstorms in that region of the Andes, which has afforded the bells of the city more frequent opportunities for distinguishing themselves than fall to the lot of ordinary church bells. On this subject I will quote the testimony of an eminent Spanish scholar and sailor, who travelled in South America in the first half of the eighteenth century. The jurisdiction of Popayan, he informs us, is more subject to tempests of thunder and lightning and earthquakes than even Quito; "but of all the parts in this jurisdiction Caloto is accounted to be the most subject to tempests of thunder and lightning; this has brought into vogue Caloto bells, which not a few persons use, being firmly persuaded that they have a special virtue against lightning. And indeed so many stories are told on this head, that one is at a loss what to believe. Without giving credit to, or absolutely rejecting all that is reported, leaving every one to the free decision of his own judgment, I shall only relate the most received opinion here. The town of Caloto, the territory of which contains a great number of Indians, of a nation called Paezes, was formerly very large, but those Indians suddenly assaulting it, soon forced their way in, set fire to the houses, and massacred the inhabitants: among the slain was the priest of the parish, who was particularly the object of their rage, as preaching the gospel, with which they were sensible their savage manner of living did not agree, exposing the folly and wickedness of their idolatry, and laying before them the turpitude of their vices. Even the bell of the church could not escape their rancour, as by its sound it reminded them of their duty to come and receive divine instruction. After many fruitless endeavours to break it, they thought they could do nothing better than bury it under ground, that, by the sight of it, they might never be put in mind of the precepts of the gospel, which tended to abridge them of their liberty. On the news of their revolt, the Spaniards in the

The bells of Caloto in South America.

[1] H. B. Walters, *Church Bells of England* (London, etc., 1912), p. 262.

neighbourhood of Caloto armed; and, having taken a smart revenge of the insurgents in a battle, they rebuilt the town, and having taken up the bell, they placed it in the steeple of the new church; since which the inhabitants, to their great joy and astonishment, observed, that, when a tempest appeared brooding in the air, the tolling of the bell dispersed it; and if the weather did not everywhere grow clear and fair, at least the tempest discharged itself in some other part. The news of this miracle spreading everywhere, great solicitations were made for procuring pieces of it to make clappers for little bells, in order to enjoy the benefit of its virtue, which, in a country where tempests are both so dreadful and frequent, must be of the highest advantage. And to this Caloto owes its reputation for bells."[1]

Bells used by the Bateso of Central Africa to exorcize thunder and lightning.

The great discovery that it is possible to silence thunder and extinguish the thunderbolt by the simple process of ringing a bell, has not been confined to the Christian nations of Europe and their descendants in the New World; it has been shared by some at least of the pagan savages of Africa. "The Teso people," we are informed, "make use of bells to exorcise the storm fiend; a person who has been injured by a flash or in the resulting fire wears bells round the ankles for weeks afterwards. Whenever rain threatens, and rain in Uganda almost always comes in company with thunder and lightning, this person will parade the village for an hour, with the jingling bells upon his legs and a wand of papyrus in his hand, attended by as many of his family as may happen to be at hand and not employed in necessary duties. Any one killed outright by lightning is not buried in the house according to the usual custom, but is carried to a distance and interred beside a stream in some belt of forest. Upon the grave are put all the pots and other household utensils owned by the dead person, and at the door of the hut upon which the stroke fell, now of course a smoking ruin, is planted a sacrifice of hoes which is left for some days. It is interesting to note the efficacy attributed to bells and running water, as in some old European superstitions."[2]

[1] Don George Juan and Don Antonio de Ulloa, *Voyage to South America*, Fifth Edition (London, 1807), i. 341-343.

[2] Rev. A. L. Kitching, *On the Backwaters of the Nile* (London and Leipsic, 1912), pp. 264 *sq.*

As it seems improbable that the Bateso learned these practices from the missionaries, we may perhaps give them the undivided credit of having invented for themselves the custom of exorcizing the storm-fiend by bells and mollifying him by presents of pots and hoes laid on the scene of his devastation and the grave of his victim. The Chinese also resort to the use of gongs, which for practical purposes may be regarded as equivalent to bells, with a view of combating the ill effects of thunder; but the circumstances under which they do so are peculiar. When a person has been attacked by smallpox, and the pustules have come out, but before the end of the seventh day, whenever it thunders, some member of the family is deputed to beat on a gong or drum, which is kept in readiness for the emergency. The beater has the assistance of another member of the family to inform him when the thunder has ceased, for the operator himself makes far too much noise to be able to distinguish between the peals of thunder and the crash of his gong or the roll of his drum. The object, we are told, of this gonging or drumming is to prevent the pustules of the smallpox from breaking or bursting; but the explanations which the Chinese give of the way in which this result is effected by the beating of a gong or a drum can hardly be regarded as satisfactory.[1] On the analogy of the European theory we may conjecture that originally the bursting of the pustules was supposed to be brought about by the demon of thunder, who could be driven away by the banging of a gong or the rub-a-dub of a drum.

Gongs beaten by the Chinese in thunderstorms.

But while savages seem quite able of themselves to hit on the device of scaring evil spirits by loud noises, there is evidence to show that they are also ready to adopt from Europeans any practices which, in their opinion, are likely to serve the same purpose. An instance of such borrowing is recorded by two missionaries, who laboured among the natives of Port Moresby, in British New Guinea. "One night during a thunderstorm," they say, "we heard a terrible noise in the village;—the natives were beating their drums and shouting lustily in order to drive away the storm-spirits.

Church bells thought by natives of New Guinea to drive away ghosts.

[1] Rev. Justus Doolittle, *Social Life of the Chinese*, edited and revised by the Rev. Paxton Hood (London, 1868), p. 114.

By the time their drumming and vociferation ceased, the storm *had* passed away, and the villagers were well satisfied. One Sabbath night, in a similar way, they expelled the sickness-producing spirits who had occasioned the death of several natives! When the church bell was first used, the natives thanked Mr. Lawes for having—as they averred—driven away numerous bands of ghosts from the interior. In like manner they were delighted at the bark of a fine dog domesticated at the mission house (the dingo cannot bark), as they felt certain that all the ghosts would now be compelled to rush back to the interior. Unfortunately, the ghosts got used to the bell and the dog! So the young men had to go about at night—often hiding in terror behind trees and bushes—well armed with bows and arrows, to shoot down these obnoxious spirits."[1] Thus the savages of Port Moresby entirely agree with the opinion of the learned Christian scholiast, John Tzetzes, that for the banning of evil spirits there is nothing better than the clangour of bronze and the barking of a dog.[2]

Bells used by the Pueblo Indians for the purpose of exorcism.

Some of the Pueblo Indians of Arizona exorcize witches by the sound of bells; but probably they borrowed the practice from the old Spanish missionaries, for before the coming of Europeans the use of all metals, except gold and silver, and hence the making of bells, was unknown among the aborigines of America. An American officer has described one of these scenes of exorcism as he witnessed it at a village of the Moquis, perched, like many Pueblo villages, on the crest of a high tableland overlooking the fruitful grounds in the valley below:—

"The Moquis have an implicit belief in witches and witchcraft, and the air about them is peopled with maleficent spirits. Those who live at Oraybe exorcise the malign influences with the chanting of hymns and ringing of bells. While with General Crook at that isolated and scarcely-known town, in the fall of 1874, by good luck I had an opportunity of witnessing this strange mode of incantation. The whole village seemed to have assembled, and after shouting in a loud and defiant tone a hymn or litany of musical

[1] James Chalmers and W. Wyatt Gill, *Work and Adventure in New Guinea* (London, 1885), pp. 259 *sq.*

[2] Above, p. 448.

sound, emphasised by an energetic ringing of a bell, advanced rapidly, in single file, down the trail leading from the crest of the precipice to the peach orchards below. The performers, some of the most important of whom were women, pranced around the boundaries of the orchard, pausing for a brief space of time at the corners, all the while singing in a high key and getting the worth of their money out of the bell. At a signal from the leader a rush was made for the trees, from which, in less than an hour, the last of the delicious peaches breaking down the branches were pulled and carried by the squaws and children to the village above."[1] The motive for thus dancing round the orchard, to the loud chanting of hymns and the energetic ringing of a bell, was no doubt to scare away the witches, who were supposed to be perched among the boughs of the peach-trees, battening on the luscious fruit.

Gongs beaten by the Chinese to exorcize demons.

However, the use of bells and gongs for the purpose of exorcism has been familiar to many peoples, who need not have borrowed either the instruments or the application of them from the Christian nations of Europe. In China "the chief instrument for the production of exorcising noise is the gong. This well-known circular plate of brass is actually a characteristic feature of China, resounding throughout the empire every day, especially in summer, when a rise in the death-rate induces an increase in devil-expelling activity. Clashing of cymbals of brass, and rattling of drums of wood and leather, intensify its useful effects. Very often small groups of men and even women are beating on gongs, cymbals, and drums for a succession of hours. No protest is heard from their neighbours, no complaint that they disturb their night's rest; such savage music then must either sound agreeable to Chinese ears, or be heard with gratitude as a meritorious work, gratuitously performed by benevolent folks who have at heart the private and public weal and health."[2] In Southern China these solemn and public ceremonies of exorcism take place chiefly during the heat of summer, when cholera is rampant and its ravages are

[1] John G. Bourke, *The Snake-dance of the Moquis of Arizona* (London, 1884), pp. 258 *sq.*

[2] J. J. M. de Groot, *The Religious System of China*, vi. (Leyden, 1910) p. 945.

popularly attributed to the malice of demons hovering unseen in the air. To drive these noxious beings from house and home is the object of the ceremonies. The whole affair is arranged by a committee, and the expenses are defrayed by subscription, the local mandarins generally heading the list of subscribers with goodly sums. The actual business of banishing the devils is carried out by processions of men and boys, who parade the streets and beat the bounds in the most literal sense, striking at the invisible foes with swords and axes, and stunning them with the clangour of gongs, the jangle of bells, the popping of crackers, the volleys of matchlocks, and the detonation of blunderbusses.[1]

Bells used by the Annamese in exorcism.

In Annam the exorcizer, in the act of banning the demons of sickness from a private house, strums a lute and jingles a chain of copper bells attached to his big toe, while his assistants accompany him on stringed instruments and drums. However, the chime of the bells is understood by the hearers to proceed from the neck of an animal on which a deity is galloping to the aid of the principal performer.[2]

Religious use of bells in Burma.

Bells play a great part in the religious rites of Burma. Every large pagoda has dozens of them, and the people seem to be much attached to their sweet and sonorous music. At the present day their use is said to be, not so much to drive away evil spirits, as to announce to the guardian spirits that the praises of Buddha have been chanted; hence at the conclusion of his devotions the worshipper proclaims the discharge of his pious duty by three strokes on a bell.[3] However, we may conjecture that this interpretation is one of those afterthoughts by which an advanced religion justifies and hallows the retention of an old barbaric rite that was originally instituted for a less refined and beautiful purpose. Perhaps in Europe also the ringing of church bells, the sound of which has endeared itself to so many pious hearts

[1] J. J. M. de Groot, *The Religious System of China*, vi. 981-986.

[2] E. Diguet, *Les Annamites, Société, Coutumes, Religion* (Paris, 1906), p. 280.

[3] Shway Yoe (Sir J. George Scott), *The Burman, his Life and Notions* (London, 1882), i. 241 *sqq.*, especially 244. Compare Adolf Bastian, *Die Voelker des Oestlichen Asien* (Leipsic and Jena, 1866–1871), ii. 33, 105 *sq.*; Cecil Headlam, *Ten Thousand Miles through India and Burma* (London, 1903), p. 284. In Japan we hear of a temple of Buddha provided with a bell "which is rung to attract the god's attention." See Isabella L. Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* (London, 1911), p. 27.

by its own intrinsic sweetness and its tender associations,[1] was practised to banish demons from the house of prayer before it came to be regarded as a simple means of summoning worshippers to their devotions in the holy place.

Sound of bells and metal vessels at funerals and in mourning among primitive peoples.

However, among ruder peoples of Asia the use of bells in exorcism, pure and simple, has lingered down to modern times. At a funeral ceremony observed by night among the Michemis, a Tibetan tribe near the northern frontier of Assam, a priest, fantastically bedecked with tiger's teeth, many-coloured plumes, bells and shells, executed a wild dance for the purpose of exorcizing the evil spirits, while the bells jingled and the shells clattered about his person.[2] Among the Kirantis, a tribe of the Central Himalayas, who bury their dead on hill-tops, "the priest must attend the funeral, and as he moves along with the corpse to the grave he from time to time strikes a copper vessel with a stick, and, invoking the soul of the deceased, desires it to go in peace, and join the souls that went before it."[3] This beating of a copper vessel at the funeral may have been intended, either to hasten the departure of the ghost to his own place, or to drive away the demons who might molest his passage. It may have been for one or other of these purposes that in antiquity, when a Spartan king died, the women used to go about the streets of the city beating a kettle.[4] Among the Bantu tribes of Kavirondo, in Central Africa, when a woman has separated from her husband and gone back to her own people, she deems it nevertheless her duty on his death to mourn for him in his village. For that purpose "she fastens a cattle bell to her waist at the back, collects her friends, and the party proceeds to the village at

[1] Compare Cowper, *The Task*, bk. vi. 1 *sqq.* :—

"*There is in souls a sympathy with sounds,*
And as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased
With melting airs or martial, brisk or grave:
Some chord in unison with what we hear
Is touched within us, and the heart replies.
How soft the music of those village bells,
Falling at intervals upon the ear
In cadence sweet! now dying all away,
Now pealing loud again, and louder still,
Clear and sonorous, as the gale comes on.
With easy force it opens all the cells
Where memory slept. Wherever I have heard
A kindred melody, the scene recurs,
And with it all its pleasures and its pains."

[2] Letter of the missionary Krick, in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, xxvi. (Lyons, 1854) pp. 86-88.

[3] Brian Houghton Hodgson, *Miscellaneous Essays relating to Indian Subjects* (London, 1880), i. 402.

[4] Herodotus vi. 58.

a trot, the bell clanking in a melancholy manner the whole way."[1] Here, again, the sound of the bell may be intended to keep the husband's ghost at a safe distance, or perhaps to direct his attention to the dutifulness of his widow in sorrowing for his death. In the south-eastern districts of Dutch Borneo it is customary with the Dyaks to sound gongs day and night so long as a corpse remains in the house. The melancholy music begins as soon as a dying man has breathed his last. The tune is played on four gongs of different tones, which are beaten alternately at regular intervals of about two seconds. Hour after hour, day after day the melody is kept up; and we are told that nothing, not even the Passing Bell of Catholic Europe, is more weird and affecting to a listener than the solemn notes of these death-gongs sounding monotonously and dying away over the broad rivers of Borneo.[2]

Sound of bells and gongs used by the natives of Borneo to keep off evil spirits.

Though we are not informed why the Dyaks in this part of Borneo beat the gongs continuously after a death, we may conjecture that the intention is to keep off evil spirits rather than simply to announce the bereavement to friends at a distance; for if the object was merely to convey the intelligence of the decease to the neighbourhood, why sound the gongs continuously day and night so long as the body remains in the house? On the other hand we know that in Borneo the sound of metal instruments is sometimes employed expressly for the purpose of exorcizing demons. An English traveller in North Borneo describes how on one occasion he lodged in a large house of the Dusuns, which was inhabited by about a hundred men with their families: "As night came on they struck up a strange kind of music on metal tambourines. A mysterious rhythm and tune was apparent in it, and when I asked if this was *main-main* (*i.e.* larking), they said no, but that a man was sick, and they must play all night to keep away evil spirits."[3] Again, the Dusuns of North Borneo solemnly expel all evil spirits from their villages once a year, and in the expulsion gongs are beaten and bells rung to hasten the departure of the demons.

[1] C. W. Hobley, *Eastern Uganda* (London, 1902), p. 17.

[2] M. T. H. Perelaer, *Ethnographische Beschrijving der Dajaks* (Zaltbommel, 1870), pp. 220 *sq.*

[3] Frank Hatton, *North Borneo* (London, 1885), pp. 162 *sq.*

While the men beat gongs and drums, the women go in procession from house to house, dancing and singing to the measured clash of brass castanets, which they hold in their hands, and to the jingle of little brass bells, of which bunches are fastened to their wrists. Having driven the demons from the houses, the women chase or lead them down to the bank of the river, where a raft has been prepared to convey them beyond the territories of the village. Figures of men, women, animals, and birds, made of sago-palm leaf, adorn the raft, and to render it still more attractive offerings of food and cloth and cooking pots are deposited on the planks. When the spiritual passengers are all aboard, the moorings are loosed, and the bark floats away down stream, till it rounds the farthest reach of the river and disappears from sight in the forest. Thus the demons are sent away on a long voyage to return, it is fondly hoped, no more.[1]

Bells attached to the person of an honoured visitor among the Dyaks.

When Sir Hugh Low visited a village of the Sebongoh Hill Dyaks, in August 1845, he was received with much ceremony as the first European who had ever been seen in the place. Good-naturedly joining in a prayer to the sun, the moon, and the Rajah of Sarawak, that the rice harvest might be plentiful, the pigs prolific, and the women blessed with male children, the Englishman punctuated and emphasized these petitions by throwing small portions of yellow rice towards heaven at frequent intervals, presumably for the purpose of calling the attention of the three deities to the humble requests of their worshippers. Having engaged in these edifying devotions on a public stage in front of the house, Sir Hugh returned to the verandah, where the chief of the village, in the visitor's own words, "tied a little hawk-bell round my wrist, requesting me at the same time to tie another, with which he furnished me for the purpose, round the same joint of his right hand. After this, the noisy gongs and tomtoms began to play, being suspended from the rafters at one end of the verandah, and the chief tied another of the little bells round my wrist: his example was this time followed by all the old men present, each addressing

[1] Ivor H. N. Evans, "Notes on the Religious Beliefs, etc., of the Dusuns of the Tuaran and Tempassuk Districts, British North Borneo," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xlii. (1912) pp. 382-384.

a few words to me, or rather mumbling them to themselves, of which I did not understand the purport. Every person who now came in, brought with him several bamboos of cooked rice; and each, as he arrived, added one to the number of my bells, so that they had now become inconveniently numerous, and I requested, as a favour, that the remainder might be tied upon my left wrist, if it made no difference to the ceremony. Those who followed, accordingly did as I had begged of them in this particular."[1] Though Sir Hugh Low does not explain, and probably did not know, the meaning of thus belling an honoured visitor, we may conjecture that the intention was the kindly one of keeping evil spirits at bay.

Bells worn by priests and ascetics in India.

The Patâri priest in Mirzapur and many classes of ascetics throughout India carry bells and rattles made of iron, which they shake as they walk for the purpose of scaring demons. With a like intent, apparently, a special class of devil priests among the Gonds, known as Ojhyâls, always wear bells.[2] It seems probable that a similar motive everywhere underlies the custom of attaching bells to various parts of the person, particularly to the ankles, wrists, and neck, either on special occasions or for long periods of time: originally, we may suppose, the tinkle of the bells was thought to protect the wearer against the assaults of bogies.

Bells worn by children in China.

It is for this purpose that small bells are very commonly worn by children in the southern provinces of China and more sparingly by children in the northern provinces;[3] and silver ornaments, with small bells hanging from them, are worn by Neapolitan women on their dresses as amulets to guard them against the Evil Eye.[4]

Bells worn by a celebrant at a religious rite among the Yezidis.

The Yezidis, who have a robust faith in the devil, perform at the conclusion of one of their pilgrimage festivals a ceremony which may be supposed to keep that ravening wolf from the fold of the faithful. An old man is stripped and dressed in the skin of a goat, while a string of small bells is hung round his

[1] (Sir) Hugh Low, *Sarawak, its Inhabitants and Productions* (London, 1848), pp. 256-258.

[2] W. Crooke, *Popular Religion and Folk-lore of Northern India* (Westminster, 1896), i. 168.

[3] N. B. Dennys, *The Folk-lore of China* (London and Hongkong, 1876), p. 55.

[4] Frederick Thomas Elworthy, *The Evil Eye* (London, 1895), pp. 356-358, 368.

neck. Thus arrayed, he crawls round the assembled pilgrims emitting sounds which are intended to mimic the bleating of a he-goat. The ceremony is believed to sanctify the assembly,[1] but we may conjecture that it does so by encircling believers with a spiritual fence which the arch enemy is unable to surmount. With a like intention, probably, a Badaga priest in Southern India ties bells to his legs before he essays to walk barefoot across the glowing embers of a fire-pit at a solemn ceremony which is apparently designed to secure a blessing on the crops.[2]

Bells worn by Badaga priest in fire-walk.

In Africa bells are much used by the natives for the purpose of putting evil spirits to flight, and we need not suppose that the custom has always or even generally been borrowed by them from Europeans, since the blacks have believed in spirits and have been acquainted with the metals, particularly with iron, from time immemorial. For example, the Yoruba-speaking people of the Slave Coast believe that there are certain wicked spirits called *abikus*, which haunt the forests and waste places and, suffering much from hunger, are very desirous of taking up their abode in human bodies. For that purpose they watch for the moment of conception and insinuate themselves into the embryos in the wombs of women. When such children are born, they peak and pine, because the hungry demons within them are consuming the better part of the nourishment destined for the support of the real infant. To rid the poor babe of its troublesome occupant, a mother will offer a sacrifice of food to the demon, and while he is devouring it, she avails herself of his distraction to attach small bells and iron rings to her child's ankles and iron chains to its neck. The jingling of the iron and the tinkling of the bells are thought to keep the demons at a distance; hence many children are to be seen with their feet weighed down by iron ornaments.[3] Among the Baganda and Banyoro of Central

The use of bells in Africa to put evil spirits to flight.

Bells worn by children among the Yorubas to keep off demons.

Bells worn by children among the Baganda and the Banyoro.

[1] W. B. Heard, "Notes on the Yezīdis," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, xli. (1911) p. 214.

[2] Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), i. 98 *sq.*

[3] Le R. P. Baudin, "Le Fétichisme, Religion des Nègres de la Guinée," *Les Missions Catholiques*, xvi. (1884) p. 249; P. Bouche, *La Côte des Esclaves et le Dahomey* (Paris, 1885), pp. 215 *sq.*; (Sir) A. B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa* (London, 1894), pp. 112 *sq.*

Africa young children learning to walk used to have small bells attached to their feet, and the reason alleged for the custom was that the bells helped the child to walk or strengthened its legs;[1] but perhaps the original motive was to deliver the little one at this critical time from the unwelcome attentions of evil spirits. With the same intention, possibly, among the Baganda parents of twins wore bells at their ankles during the long and elaborate ceremonies which the superstitious beliefs of their country imposed upon husband and wife in such cases; and special drums, one for the father and another for the mother, were beaten continually both by day and by night.[2]

Use of bells after childbirth among the Bogos.

Among the Bogos, to the north of Abyssinia, when a woman has been brought to bed, her female friends kindle a fire at the door of the house, and the mother with her infant walks slowly round it, while a great noise is made with bells and palm-branches for the purpose, we are told, of frightening away the evil spirits.[3]

Brass dish beaten at childbirth among the Gonds.

It is said that the Gonds of India "always beat a brass dish at a birth so that the noise may penetrate the child's ears, and this will remove any obstruction there may be to its hearing."[4] The reason here assigned for the custom is not likely to be the original one; more probably the noise of the beaten brass was primarily intended, like the sound of bells among the Bogos, to protect the mother and her newborn babe against the assaults of demons.

Greek legend of the infant Zeus and the Curetes.

So in Greek legend the Curetes are said to have danced round the infant Zeus, clashing their spears against their shields, to drown the child's squalls, lest they should attract the attention of his unnatural father Cronus, who was in the habit of devouring his offspring as soon as they were born.[5] We may surmise

[1] John Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911), p. 444; *id.*, *The Northern Bantu* (Cambridge, 1915), p. 46.

[2] John Roscoe, *The Baganda*, p. 65.

[3] Werner Munzinger, *Sitten und Recht der Bogos* (Winterthur, 1859), p. 37.

[4] R. V. Russell, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), iii. 88.

[5] Callimachus, *Hymn* i. 52-55 (where, in verse 54, we should perhaps read κνυζείοντος with Meineke for κουρίζοντος); Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, I. i. 7; Hyginus, *Fab.* 139. The legend was a favourite subject with ancient artists. See J. Overbeck, *Griechische Kunstmythologie*, i. (Leipsic, 1871) pp. 328, 331, 335-337; W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, ii. (Leipsic, 1890-1897) coll. 1602 *sq.*

that this Greek legend embodies a reminiscence of an old custom observed for the purpose of protecting babies against the many causes of infantile mortality which primitive man explains by the agency of malevolent and dangerous spirits. To be more explicit, we may conjecture that in former times, when a Greek child was born, the father and his friends were wont to arm themselves with spear or sword and shield and to execute a war dance round the child, clashing their spears or swords against their shields, partly in order to drown the cries of the infant, lest they should attract the attention of the prowling spirits, but partly also to frighten away the demons by the din; while in order to complete the discomfiture of the invisible foes they brandished their weapons, cutting and thrusting vigorously with them in the empty air. At least this conjecture is supported by the following analogies.

The legend probably reflects an old custom of warding off evil spirits at childbirth.

A Spanish priest, writing towards the beginning of the eighteenth century, has described as follows the practices observed by the Tagalogs of the Philippine Islands at the birth of a child. "The *patianak*, which some call goblin (if it be not fiction, dream, or their imagination), is the genius or devil who is accustomed to annoy them. . . . To him they attribute the ill result of childbirth, and say that to do them damage, or to cause them to go astray, he places himself in a tree, or hides in any place near the house of the woman who is in childbirth, and there sings after the manner of those who go wandering, etc. To hinder the evil work of the *patianak*, they make themselves naked, and arm themselves with cuirass, bolo, lance, and other arms, and in this manner place themselves on the ridgepole of the roof, and also under the house, where they give many blows and thrusts with the bolo, and make many gestures and motions ordered to the same intent."[1] According to another version

Evil spirits warded off by armed men at childbirth among the Tagalogs of the Philippines.

[1] Fletcher Gardner, "Philippine (Tagalog) Superstitions," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, xix. (1906) pp. 192 *sq.* This account of Tagalog superstitions is translated from *La Practica del Minesterio*, by Padre Tomas Ortiz, Order of Augustinians, published at Manila in 1713. The original is said to be very rare, only a single copy being known to be in existence. The *bolo* is a broad-bladed knife or sword. See Albert Ernest Jenks, *The Bontoc Igorot* (Manila, 1905), p. 130 (*Department of the Interior, Ethnological Survey Publications*, vol. i.); Otto Scheerer, *The Nabaloi Dialect* (Manila, 1905), p. 153 (*Department of the Interior,*

of the account, the husband and his friends arm themselves with sword, shield, and spear, and thus equipped hew and slash furiously in the air, both on the roof of the house and underneath it (the houses being raised above the ground on poles), for the purpose of frightening and driving away the dangerous spirit who would injure the mother and child.[1] These armed men, repelling the demon from the newborn babe by cut and thrust of their weapons, appear to be the savage counterpart of the ancient Greek Curetes.

Evil spirits warded off by armed men at childbirth among the Kachins of Burma.

Similar beliefs concerning the dangers to which infants are exposed from spiritual enemies have led the wild Kachins of Burma to adopt very similar precautions, for the sake of guarding a mother and her offspring. "At the instant of birth the midwife says 'the child is named so-and-so.' If she does not do this, some malignant *nat* or spirit will give the child a name first, and so cause it to pine away and die. If mother and child do well, there is general drinking and eating, and the happy father is chaffed. If, however, childbirth is attended with much labour, then it is evident that *nats* are at work and a *tumsa* or seer is called into requisition. This man goes to another house in the village and consults the bamboos (*chippawt*) to discover whether it is the house-*nat* who is averse, or whether a jungle *nat* has come and driven the guardian *nat* away. These jungle *nats* are termed *sawn*, and are the spirits of those who have died in childbirth or by violent deaths. They naturally wish for companions,

Ethnological Survey Publications, vol. ii. Part ii.). The spirit *patianak*, whom the priest calls a goblin or devil, is probably the ghost of a woman who has died in childbed. Such ghosts are commonly known by similar names (*pontianak*, *kuntianak*, *matianak*, etc.) in the East Indies and are greatly dreaded by women in childbed. See G. A. Wilken, "Het animisme bij de volken van den Indischen Archipel," *De verspreide Geschriften* (The Hague, 1912), iii. 222-230; Alb. C. Kruijt, *Het animisme in den Indischen Archipel* (The Hague, 1906), pp. 245-251. Both these writers believe that the *patianak* of the Philippines is probably identical with the *pontianak* of the Malay Archipelago, though there is seemingly no positive evidence of the identity.

[1] Ferd. Blumentritt, "Der Ahnencultus und die religiösen Anschauungen der Malaien des Philippinen-Archipels," *Mittheilungen der Wiener geographischen Gesellschaft*, 1882, p. 178 (referring to Fray Ortiz and other writers as his authorities); *id.*, *Versuch einer Ethnographie der Philippinen* (Gotha, 1882), p. 14 (*Petermann's Mittheilungen, Ergänzungsheft*, No. 67). Compare J. Mallat, *Les Philippines* (Paris, 1846), p. 65.

and so enter the house and seize the woman and child. If the bamboo declares that it is the house-*nat* who is angry, he is propitiated by offerings of spirits or by sacrifice in the ordinary manner. If, however, it appears that a *sawn* has taken possession, then prompt action is necessary. Guns are fired all round the house and along the paths leading into the village, arrows are shot under the floor of the house, *dhas* [swords or large knives] and torches are brandished over the body of the woman, and finally old rags, chillies, and other materials likely to produce a sufficiently noisome smell are piled under the raised flooring and set fire to, thereby scaring away any but the most obstinate and pertinacious spirits."[1] To the same effect a Catholic missionary among the Kachins tells us that in the case of a difficult birth these savages "accuse the *sawn* (ghosts of women who died in childbed) of wishing to kill the mother, and they make a regular hunt after them. They rummage in every corner of the house, brandishing spears and knives, making all sorts of noises, of which the least inodorous are the most effectual; they even strip themselves beside the sufferer in order to horrify the evil spirits. In and outside the house they burn stinking leaves, with rice, pepper, and everything that can produce a foul smell; on every side they raise cries, fire muskets, shoot arrows, strike blows with swords, and continue this uproar along the principal road in the forest, as far as the nearest torrent, where they imagine that they put the *sawn* to flight."[2]

Evil spirits warded off at childbirth by clashing metallic instruments, beating drums, firing guns, &c., among various peoples.

When a Kalmuk woman is in travail, her husband stretches a net round the tent, and runs to and fro beating the air with a club and crying, "Devil avaunt!" until the child is born: this he does in order to keep the foul fiend at bay.[3] Among the Nogais, a tribe of Tartars, "when a boy is born, everybody goes to the door of the house with kettles. They make a great noise, saying that they do so in order to put the devil to flight, and that he will have no

[1] (Sir) J. George Scott and J. P. Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States* (Rangoon, 1900–1901), Part i. vol. i. p. 399.

[2] Le P. Ch. Gilhodes, "Naissance et Enfance chez les Katchins (Birmanie)," *Anthropos*, vi. (Vienna, 1911) p. 869.

[3] P. S. Pallas, *Reise durch verschiedene Provinzen des Russischen Reichs* (St. Petersburg, 1771–1776), i. 360. Compare J. G. Georgi, *Beschreibung aller Nationen des Russischen Reichs* (St. Petersburg, 1776), p. 412.

more power over the spirit of that child."[1] In Boni or Bone, a princedom of Southern Celebes, when a woman is in hard labour, the men "sometimes raise a shout or fire a gun in order, by so doing, to drive away the evil spirits who are hindering the birth"; and at the birth of a prince, as soon as the infant has been separated from the afterbirth, all the metal instruments used for expelling demons are struck and clashed "in order to drive away the evil spirits."[2] For the same purpose drums are beaten in the Aru islands, to the south-west of New Guinea, when a delivery is unduly delayed.[3] The spirit of a certain stream, which flows into Burton Gulf, on Lake Tanganyika, is believed by the natives of the neighbourhood to be very unfriendly to women with child, whom he prevents from bringing forth. When a woman believes herself to be suffering from his machinations, she orders sacrifices to be offered and certain ceremonies to be performed. All the inhabitants of the village assemble, beat drums near the hut where the patient is confined, and shout and dance "to drive away the evil spirit."[4] Among the Singhalese of Ceylon, when a birth has taken place, "the cries of the babe are drowned by those of the nurse, lest the spirits of the forest become aware of its presence and inflict injury on it."[5] So the ancient Romans believed that a woman after childbirth was particularly liable to be attacked by the forest god Silvanus, who made his way into the house by night on purpose to vex and harry her. Hence during the night three men used to go round the thresholds of the house, armed respectively with an axe, a pestle, and a besom; at every threshold they stopped, and while the first two men smote it with the axe and the pestle, the third man swept it with his broom. In this way they thought

Precautions against Silvanus at childbirth among the ancient Romans.

[1] "Relation du Sieur Ferrand, Médecin du Kan des Tartares, touchant la Krime'e, les Tartares Nogaïs, etc." *Recueil de Voyages au Nord*, Nouvelle Édition (Amsterdam, 1731–1738), iv. 524.

[2] "Het leenvorstendom Boni," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde*, xv. (Batavia and the Hague, 1865) pp. 40, 117. The instruments (called *pabongka setangs*) appear to be a sort of cymbals; at least they are played by being clashed together (*op. cit.* p. 118).

[3] J. G. F. Riedel, *De sluik- en kroes-harige rassen tusschen Celebes en Papua* (The Hague, 1886), p. 265. Compare *id.*, p. 449.

[4] Letter of Father Guillemé, in *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, lx. (Lyons, 1888) p. 252.

[5] Arthur A. Perera, "Glimpses of Singhalese Social Life," *The Indian Antiquary*, xxxi. (1902) p. 379.

to protect the mother from the attacks of the woodland deity.[1]

Application of these parallels to the legend of Zeus and the Curetes.

Similarly we may suppose that in ancient Greece it was formerly customary for armed men to protect women in childbed from their spiritual foes by dancing round them and clashing their spears or swords on their shields, and even when the old custom had long fallen into abeyance among men, legend might still tell how the rite had been celebrated by the Curetes about the cradle of the infant Zeus.

Tinkling anklets worn by girls among the Sunars of Central India.

But from this digression we must return to the use of bells as a means of repelling the assaults of ghosts and demons. Among the Sunars, who are the goldsmiths and silversmiths of the Central Provinces in India, children and young girls wear hollow anklets with tinkling bells inside; but when a married woman has had several children, she leaves off wearing the hollow anklet and wears a solid one instead. "It is now said that the reason why girls wear sounding anklets is that their whereabouts may be known, and they may be prevented from getting into mischief in dark corners. But the real reason was probably that they served as spirit scarers."[2] Among the Nandi of British East Africa, when a girl is about to be circumcised, she receives from her sweethearts and admirers the loan of large bells, which they usually wear on their legs, but which for this solemn occasion they temporarily transfer to the damsel. A popular girl will frequently receive as many as ten or twenty bells, and she wears them all when the painful operation is performed upon her. As soon as it is over, she stands up and shakes the bells above her head, then goes to meet her lover, and gives him back the borrowed bells.[3] If we knew why Nandi warriors regularly wear bells on their legs, we should probably know why girls wear the very same bells at circumcision. In the absence of positive information we may

Use of bells at the circumcision of girls among the Nandi.

[1] Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, vi. 9. Augustine's authority is probably Varro, to whom he repeatedly refers by name in this chapter.

[2] R. V. Russell, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), iv. 527.

[3] A. C. Hollis, *The Nandi* (Oxford, 1909), pp. 58 *sq.*, 88. Compare C. W. Hobley, "British East Africa, Anthropological Studies in Kavirondo and Nandi," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxiii. (1903) pp. 351, 352.

surmise that the bells are regarded as amulets, which protect both sexes against the supernatural dangers to which each, in virtue of its special functions, is either permanently or temporarily exposed.

Use of bells to ward off demons on the Congo and the Victoria Nyanza.

In the Congo region the natives fear that demons may enter their bodies through the mouth when they are in the act of drinking; hence on these occasions they make use of various contrivances in order to keep these dangerous beings at a distance, and one of the devices is to ring a bell before every draught of liquid. A chief has been observed to drink ten pots of beer at a sitting in this fashion, shaking his magic bell every time before he raised the beaker to his lips, while by way of additional precaution a boy brandished the chief's spear in front of that dignitary to prevent the demons from insinuating themselves into his stomach with the beer.[1] In this region, also, bells which have been enchanted by the fetish-man are worn as amulets, which can avert fever, bullets, and locusts, and can render the wearer invisible.[2] Among the Bakerewe, who inhabit Ukerewe, the largest island in Lake Victoria Nyanza, it is customary to fasten a bell immediately over the door of every house, and every person on entering the dwelling is careful to ring the bell by knocking his head against it, not, as in Europe, to warn the inmates of his arrival, but to ward off evil spirits and to dispel the enchantments of sorcerers.[3] In West Africa the jangling of bells helps to swell the general uproar which accompanies the periodic banishment of bogies from the haunts of men.[4]

Use of bells by priests, prophets, and medicine-men in Africa.

But in Africa the carrying or wearing of bells is particularly characteristic of priests, prophets, and medicine-men in the performance of their solemn ceremonies, whether for the expulsion of demons, the cure of sickness, or the revelation of the divine will to mortals. For example, among the Akamba

[1] *Notes Analytiques sur les Collections Ethnographiques du Musée du Congo*, i. *Les Arts, Religion* (Brussels, 1902–1906), p. 164.

[2] *Notes Analytiques sur les Collections Ethnographiques du Musée du Congo*, i. *Les Arts, Religion* (Brussels, 1902–1906), p. 161.

[3] P. Eugene Hurel, "Religion et Vie domestique des Bakerewe," *Anthropos*, vi. (1911) p. 74.

[4] Rev. James Macdonald, *Religion and Myth* (London, 1893), p. 106. As to these periodic expulsions of demons in West Africa see further *The Scapegoat*, pp. 203 *sqq.* (*The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part vi.).

of British East Africa magicians carry iron cattle-bells attached to a leathern thong, and they ring them when they are engaged in telling fortunes; the sound of the bell is supposed to attract the attention of the spirits. One of these medicine-men told Mr. Hobley that he had dreamed how God told him to get a bell; so he made a special journey to Kikuyu to buy the bell, and on his return he gave a feast of beer and killed a bullock to propitiate the spirits.[1] Among the Gallas of East Africa the class of priests (*Lubas*) is distinct from the class of exorcists (*Kalijos*), but both priests and exorcists carry bells in the celebration of their peculiar rites; and the exorcist is armed in addition with a whip, which he does not hesitate to lay on smartly to the patient for the purpose of driving out the devil by whom the sick man is supposed to be possessed.[2] Again, among the Fans of the Gaboon a witch-doctor, engaged in the detection of a sorcerer, wears a number of little bells fastened to his ankles and wrists, and he professes to be guided by the sound of the bells in singling out the alleged culprit from the crowd of anxious and excited onlookers.[3] The Hos of Togoland, in West Africa, believe in the existence of a sort of "drudging goblin" or "lubber fiend," who miraculously multiplies the cowry-shells in a man's treasure-chamber and the crops in his field. The name of this serviceable spirit is Sowlui, and curiously enough the Hos bestow the very same name on the sound of the little bells which Ho priests, like Jewish priests of old, bind on the lower hem of their robes.[4] Among the Banyoro of Central Africa the god of Lake Albert communicated with mortals by the intervention of a prophetess, who wore a fringe of cowry-shells and small iron bells on her leather garment, and as she walked the fringe undulated like the waves of the lake.[5] In the same tribe the god of plenty, by name Wamala, who gave increase of man and cattle and crops, was represented by a prophet, who uttered oracles in the name of the deity. When the prophetic

[1] C. W. Hobley, *Ethnology of A-Kamba and other East African Tribes* (Cambridge, 1910); pp. 99 *sq.*

[2] J. Lewis Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours during an Eighteen Years' Residence in Eastern Africa* (London, 1860), pp. 76-78.

[3] H. Trilles, *Le Totémisme chez les Fân* (Münster i. W., 1912), pp. 563 *sq.*

[4] Jakob Spieth, *Die Ewe-Stämme* (Berlin, 1906), p. 429.

[5] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu* (Cambridge, 1915), p. 92.

fit was on him, this man wore bells on his ankles and two white calf-skins round his waist, with a row of little iron bells dangling from the lower edge of the skins.[1]

The bells of Jewish priests were probably intended either to repel demons or to attract the attention of the deity.

These instances may suffice to show how widespread has been the use of bells in magical or religious rites, and how general has been the belief that their tinkle has power to banish demons. From a few of the examples which I have cited it appears that sometimes the sound of bells is supposed, not so much to repel evil spirits, as to attract the attention of good or guardian spirits,[2] but on the whole the attractive force of these musical instruments in primitive ritual is far less conspicuous than the repulsive. The use of bells for the purpose of attraction rather than of repulsion may correspond to that more advanced stage of religious consciousness when the fear of evil is outweighed by trust in the good, when the desire of pious hearts is not so much to flee from the Devil as to draw near to God. In one way or another the practices and beliefs collected in this chapter may serve to illustrate and perhaps to explain the Jewish custom from which we started, whether it be that the priest in his violet robe, as he crossed the threshold of the sanctuary, was believed to repel the assaults of demons or to attract the attention of the deity by the chime and jingle of the golden bells.

[1] John Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, p. 90. For more evidence of the use of bells by African priests or medicine-men, see J. H. Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (London, 1912), ch. xviii. pp. 419 *sq.* (*Everyman's Library*); *Notes Analytiques sur les Collections Ethnographiques du Musée du Congo*, i. *Les Arts, Religion* (Brussels, 1902–1906), pp. 188, 300; Sir Harry Johnston, *George Grenfell and the Congo* (London, 1908), ii. 663 *sq.*; A. Bastian, *Die deutsche Expedition an der Loango-Küste* (Jena, 1874), i. 46; Paul B. du Chaillu, *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa* (London, 1861), pp. 253 *sq.*; P. Amaury Talbot, *In the Shadow of the Bush* (London, 1912), p. 328; E. Perregaux, *Chez les Achanti* (Neuchâtel, 1906), p. 269.

[2] Above, pp. 466, 479.

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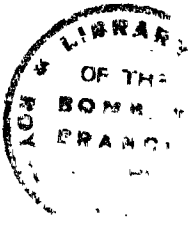

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